# Rethinking Leadership

## The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors

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The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 67 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its board of directors is composed of the superintendent of schools and one school board member from each member city. An executive committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between superintendents and school board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in their improvement. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities in areas such as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, and technology. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

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# Rethinking Leadership

The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2012, the Council of the Great City Schools launched a two-part study of the ways principal supervisors are selected, supported, and evaluated in major school districts across the country. The first part involved a survey administered to district staff serving as principal supervisors in the fall of 2012. The second part of the study involved site visits to the six districts participating in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative—Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Denver Public Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, the New York City Department of Education, and Prince George's County Public Schools.

This report provides a summary of findings from both the survey and site visits. Part I presents a description of the organizational structure and general features of the various principal supervisory systems, including the roles, selection, deployment, staffing, professional development, and evaluation of principal supervisors, as well as the preparation, selection, support, and evaluation of principals.

Part II provides recommendations for building more effective principal supervisory systems. Based on the survey results and observations from the site visits, these recommendations identify those structures and practices that are *most likely* to result in stronger school leaders and higher student achievement.

The report concludes that districts should:

1. Define and clearly communicate throughout the organization the role and required competencies of principal supervisors.

2. Narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control.

3. Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the needs of schools.

4. Provide principal supervisors with the professional development and training they need to assume new instructional leadership roles.

5. Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure clear lines of communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and central office staff.

6. Provide early and sustained support to new principals in the form of coaches.

7. Hold principals—and principal supervisors—accountable for the progress of their schools, and ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance.

8. Provide clear, timely, and actionable evaluation data to principals.

9. Commit district resources and engage external partners in the process of developing future school and district leaders.

# STUDY OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a growing understanding of the transformative power of school leadership has helped redefine the role and expectations of principals, as well as the way districts prepare, select, and evaluate principals. These widespread changes have also transformed the role of principal supervisors—those charged with overseeing, supporting, and evaluating this new generation of school leaders.

In the fall of 2012, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) received a grant from The Wallace Foundation to further investigate the ways principal supervisors are selected, supported, and evaluated in major school districts across the country, looking specifically at the roles and responsibilities of staff in these positions. The Council is a coalition of 67 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. The organization conducts research and provides advocacy support and hands-on technical assistance to its members to help advance academic achievement, leadership, and operational management in urban districts.

The study commissioned by The Wallace Foundation was conducted in two parts. The first part involved a survey administered to member district staff serving as principal supervisors in the fall of 2012. The results from that survey were released in March 2013 in a report entitled *Principal Evaluations and the Principal Supervisor: Survey Results from the Great City Schools*.

The second part of the study involved visits to six districts participating in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative—a multi-year undertaking designed to improve training and support mechanisms for principals and to test the effect on student achievement. The six districts—Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Denver Public Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, the New York City Department of Education, and Prince George's County Public Schools—are putting in place new processes to help develop a larger corps of effective school principals. The goal is to test the following: If an urban district, and its principal training programs, provide a large number of talented aspiring principals with the right pre-service training and on-the-job support, the result will be a pipeline of principals able to improve teacher quality and student achievement, especially in schools with the greatest needs.

The pipeline effort has highlighted the role of the people who manage principals—principal supervisors—and both the foundation and districts realized not much is known about this role. At Wallace's request, CGCS visited the six sites to learn more about the work of principal supervisors as it is played out on the ground.

This report provides a summary of findings from both the survey and the site visits.[1] Part I begins by briefly describing the general features of the principal supervisory structures in each of the six site visit districts. This section then presents comparisons and common themes observed across districts in the areas of organizational structures and the roles, selection, deployment, staffing, professional development, and evaluation of principal supervisors, as well as the preparation, selection, support, and evaluation of principals. Part II provides a set of recommendations for building more effective principal supervisory systems—those practices observed across districts that appear best positioned to positively impact the work of supervisors and principals and, ultimately, to improve student achievement.

## METHODOLOGY

This study sought to answer four main research questions:

1. How do districts select, prepare, and provide professional development to principal supervisors?

2. To what extent are principal supervisors expected to assume an instructional leadership role within the district, and how are they supported in this role?

3. What levels of operational/instructional support are provided to principals?

4. How are principal supervisors and principals evaluated?

First, CGCS surveyed its 67 urban public school district members, along with two other school systems that are part of The Wallace Foundation's pipeline initiative but are not members of the Council—Gwinnett County Public Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools. The survey was sent to superintendents in each district and was conducted via Survey Monkey. Superintendents were asked to forward the survey to staff members who best fit the "principal supervisor" role. The instrument remained in the field between October 10 and November 26, 2012, and multiple reminders were sent to boost response rates.

Surveys with usable data were received from 135 individuals in 41 districts, including 39 of the 67 CGCS member districts and two non-member Wallace pipeline districts, for a response rate of nearly 60 percent. The survey asked for information about the characteristics and roles of principal supervisors, the professional development provided to them, and the perceived effectiveness of their principal evaluation systems. The survey also asked respondents to indicate how these roles and responsibilities had changed between 2010 and 2012. Otherwise, all results apply to the school year ending in June 2012. Apart from selected data on the numbers of principal supervisors, all other data are reported in the aggregate rather than by district.

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[1] See Appendix A for the complete set of survey results.

Then, a team of CGCS instructional and research staff conducted site visits between November 2012 and March 2013 to the six districts participating in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative.[2,3] The results reported in this study therefore apply to the district structures and policies that were in place during this time period and may have subsequently changed. Again, these districts were not chosen as exemplars of any particular principal supervisory structures or practices but because they were part of the principal pipeline project. The observed themes and variations therefore may not encompass the full range of systems and practices employed by districts nationwide.

These site visits typically lasted one day and involved both individual and group interviews with the superintendent, deputy superintendents, principal supervisors, principal coaches, curriculum and instruction directors and staff, research and accountability directors, human resources directors, Wallace principal pipeline project directors, and a focus group of principals. An interview rubric with tailored questions for each group was developed in advance of the visits to provide a common framework for these conversations.

In addition, the site visit team reviewed various documents provided by each district, including organizational charts, job descriptions, personnel evaluation forms, meeting agendas, classroom observation rubrics, school improvement plans, and other materials.

At the end of each visit, the team met to discuss the overall structure and specific features of each study district based on the interviews, materials, and survey responses.

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[2] Prince George's County participated in an earlier principal development site visit conducted by Break the Curve Consulting with support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in June 2012. With the agreement of all parties, notes and transcripts from that visit were used in lieu of a second visit to the district.

[3] See Appendix C for a list of the site visit team members.

# PART I. FEATURES OF
# PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORY SYSTEMS

This chapter will begin by providing brief descriptions of the principal supervisory systems in the six study districts—Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Denver Public Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, the New York City Department of Education, and Prince George's County Public Schools. These snapshots identify the basic features of these systems, including the staff responsible for evaluating principals; whom these principal supervisors report to and where they are housed within the district structure; the role they play in supporting principals; what support staff they have; and how they are selected, supported, and evaluated. Then, themes observed across districts will be discussed in each of these categories, as well as in the areas of principal preparation, support, and evaluation—important areas that contextualize the work of principal supervisors. It is important to bear in mind that while these comparisons provide a picture of the common features and variations observed among the six site visit districts—and at times among the 41 districts that responded to the survey—they may not encompass the full range of possible principal supervisory structures and practices employed by districts nationwide.

## INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT DESCRIPTIONS

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**

Principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are evaluated by one of six zone superintendents. These zone superintendents oversee geographically determined areas and handle anywhere from 16 to almost 40 schools each.[4] Charlotte-Mecklenburg also groups its Title I, ELL, and Project LIFT schools together.[5]

Zone offices are staffed with executive directors that serve a largely instructional role as the second in command to zone superintendents, as well as with curriculum staff and staff in various other areas such as special education, Response to Intervention (RtI), and Title I. Zone offices may also have a staff member that handles family support, a human resources specialist, a discipline coordinator, and an intervention specialist. However, the number and specific composition of support staff varies from zone to zone.

Zone offices are designed to function as mini district offices, providing principals with access to as much localized instructional and operational staff support and as many resources as possible. While the role of the zone superintendents is to both evaluate and provide direct instructional and operational support to principals, principals get a majority of their day-to-day support from zone staff and executive directors. At the same time, the zone office is able to access central office resources in order to provide principals with assistance.

In addition to the support they receive from zone offices, new principals are assigned consultant coaches in their first two years. These coaches are experienced, sitting principals who provide site-based support to novice principals on a monthly basis, helping them to develop instructional leadership skills. Principals may also be assigned a principal coach within their first five years. These coaches are generally veteran principals assigned to support new principals in targeted areas.

Zone superintendents are selected by a cross-division committee on the basis of strong leadership skills, instructional expertise, and the ability to manage schools. This selection committee is made up of the deputy superintendent, the chief human resources officer, a zone superintendent, and often others. Zone superintendents report to the deputy superintendent, who also serves as the chief academic officer overseeing curriculum and instruction. The zone superintendents receive ongoing support and professional development during their weekly meetings as a group. Any additional professional development is driven by their supervisor and based on specific areas of need.

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4   As of June 2013, Charlotte-Mecklenburg replaced its six zones with seven learning communities overseen by community superintendents. This has lowered the average number of schools overseen by each community superintendent.

5   While Project LIFT and ELL schools are still grouped together under the new system, Title I schools are not. The learning communities are defined primarily around feeder patterns.

Zone superintendents are evaluated using an instrument that includes multiple student achievement measures such as graduation rates, growth and proficiency on state tests, student attendance, suspension rates, and other measures. These measures are based on individual school performance goals and are aligned with the district's strategic plan. Zone superintendents, in turn, evaluate executive directors based in part on performance growth and other indicators in their zone schools.

Principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have authority over selecting instructional materials from a set of approved district programs, budgeting, and hiring and firing teachers, subject to district regulations. Specifically, principals are given budget and position allotments that they are expected to manage. Their work also involves building community partnerships and ensuring student and family engagement.

### Denver Public Schools

Principals in Denver Public Schools are evaluated by one of 13 instructional superintendents or executive directors who oversee between six and 20 schools each. Schools are grouped and assigned to instructional superintendents by grade level—elementary, middle, and high school. Given the large number of elementary schools, these schools are then grouped geographically and by school type. Turnaround schools are also grouped together and are overseen by executive directors, who play the same role as instructional superintendents. In addition, a recent decision to decrease the number of schools that instructional superintendents and executive directors oversee to no more than 10 has created a new role, the deputy instructional superintendent or deputy executive director.

Instructional superintendents and executive directors are expected to both evaluate principals and provide coaching and some direct assistance in areas such as instruction, hiring, budget, and developing and monitoring school improvement plans. They also serve as liaisons between the central office and schools. Each instructional superintendent/executive director is assigned partners in various divisions within the central office, including curriculum, human resources, finance and budget, special education, etc., whom they can contact on behalf of principals in order to direct resources and support. They are also currently assigned a staff of two partners—a data analysis partner and a school improvement partner—although these two positions are being replaced by an instructional support partner in the 2013-14 school year. Some instructional superintendents already have deputies and, in order to limit the number of schools they oversee, all elementary school instructional superintendents will have deputies starting in the 2013-14 school year.

In addition to the support they receive from their instructional superintendent or executive director, new principals are assigned both a mentor and an executive coach. While mentors provide information and guidance for navigating various district processes and procedures, the executive coaches are designed to help principals develop leadership skills.

Instructional superintendents and executive directors are hired by the superintendent on the basis of having a strong track record of success in the schools they formerly led, as well as the ability to take on expanded leadership roles and to collaborate with principals and peers within various central office departments. Instructional superintendents and executive directors report to either the assistant superintendent of elementary education or the assistant superintendent of post-secondary readiness, depending on the schools they oversee. There has not historically been a great deal of targeted professional development for staff in this role, but they did report receiving training on the Denver framework for effective teaching, as well as training from a private consultant during the previous school year that involved classroom visits and observations. In the 2012-13 school year, the district provided quarterly "off-site" meeting days, facilitated by an external specialist, and about two thirds of instructional superintendents took advantage of executive coaches provided to them by the district. Denver Public Schools is now working on developing a more systematic, cohort-based professional learning program for its leaders in these roles.

Evaluations are conducted through the district's employee performance management system and employ an individual goal-setting process based partly on the progress of schools under their supervision, as defined by movement of schools between levels in the performance framework.

In Denver, principals have authority over hiring staff, selecting instructional programs and materials from a list of district-approved options, and managing their school budgets.

**Gwinnett County Schools**

Principals in Gwinnett County are evaluated by one of five area superintendents who oversee about 25 schools each. Schools are grouped and assigned to area superintendents geographically. These area superintendents have no staff and no budget authority, functioning instead as brokers of central office resources. Their role is to interact with principals as much as possible and to connect them with central office support staff when they need assistance or additional resources.

In addition to the support they receive from area superintendents, new principals are assigned a leader mentor—former principals who provide hands-on coaching and leadership development for both principals and assistant principals.

The current area superintendents were all recent principals. They were approved by the Board of Education in December 2011 and began work in February 2012. They were selected by a cross-division panel based on their effectiveness as school leaders, as well as their ability to work collaboratively and to build relationships. A three-week induction period helped to orient area superintendents to the different divisions within central office and the resources available, as well as what the district was doing to develop future school leaders.

Area superintendents report to the associate superintendent of school leadership and operations. Area superintendents receive support primarily through bimonthly meetings with their supervisor and receive professional development through monthly leadership development meetings. They also reported participating in various professional development programs, including the Public Education Leadership Program at Harvard University and district-level leadership seminars.

Area superintendents are evaluated using the same weighted school assessments that are used to evaluate principals. Specifically, they are evaluated on the progress of their five lowest-performing schools, along with one to three additional schools selected in collaboration with the associate superintendent. The results of the weighted school assessment are aggregated to produce an overall measurement of progress in specific achievement categories.

Principals in Gwinnett County are granted greater flexibility based on student performance. This is in line with the district's managed performance/empowerment theory of action. The district maintains tight control over the curriculum and district assessments, but provides greater flexibility in other areas at the school level. Specifically, principals are granted authority in such areas as the selection of staff, school budgets, school schedules and programming, and staff development.

## Hillsborough County Public Schools

Principals in Hillsborough County are evaluated by one of eight area leadership directors who oversee about 30 schools each. Schools are grouped into areas geographically, and these area offices are generally staffed with a secretary, a staffing coordinator, a curriculum specialist, a specialist in exceptional student education, an RtI specialist, and a number of other operational staff in areas such as transportation, budget, and food services. Area leadership directors are transitioning from their previous, operations-focused roles as "area directors" into more instruction-focused leadership roles. They are expected to provide instructional support and coaching through regular communication and visits to schools but they maintain a substantial amount of operational responsibilities.

In addition to the support they receive from area leadership directors, new principals are assigned instructional coaches, who are described as a crucial source of support in helping them develop instructional knowledge and leadership skills.

Area leadership directors are selected by the superintendent on the basis of their prior work as school leaders. They report to the assistant superintendent for administration. They received professional development from the New Teacher Center, which provided coaches who spent time with them in the field, working with them on their coaching skills and on developing leadership skills. The district is now working to build internal capacity for providing professional development. District staff report that area leadership directors also receive a fair amount of coaching and instructional leadership development through the principal instructional coaches.

Area leadership directors are assessed on their progress toward meeting instructional and operational goals they set themselves, as well as on their ability to work with principals and perform principal evaluations. At the time of our site visit in November 2012, a more formal evaluation procedure for area leadership directors was still being developed.

Principals in Hillsborough County have the authority to hire teachers and other personnel, subject to the regulations governing hiring and teacher transfers. While principals do not have complete site-based autonomy in terms of school budget, they do have control over an internal budget for supplies, equipment, etc. Some principals also have Title I budgets they can use to hire additional personnel. Salaries and benefits are handled by the central office.

**New York City Department of Education**

The New York City Department of Education has a system that separates the functions of principal supervision (handled by superintendents) and support (handled by networks). Principals are evaluated by one of 32 community superintendents or eight high school superintendents, who oversee between 20 and 67 schools each. Superintendents report to the senior supervising superintendent, who reports to the chief academic officer (CAO). Superintendents have a limited role in directly supporting the leadership development of principals, and they perform principal evaluations using a highly prescribed rating tool that limits the amount of personal discretion that goes into a principal's performance review.[6]

Principals receive instructional and operational support through a separate system of networks designed to provide principals with access to individualized support and resources on a local level. There are 60 networks, and each supports roughly 25 schools.[7] Principals self-select into these networks, which are overseen by a network leader and staffed with about 15 operational and instructional specialists.[8] Networks, in turn, are grouped into five clusters of 12 networks each, led by cluster leaders who report to the CAO. These clusters are designed to provide support to the networks.

While network staffs vary in composition and structure from network to network, they typically include content specialists, specialists in areas such English learners and special education, and achievement coaches, as well as a number of specialists in operational areas such as budget and human resources.

In addition to the support they receive from networks, new principals are also assigned leadership coaches, who provide support and mentoring. After the first year principals have the option of retaining these coaches by paying for them out their school budgets. In addition, all new principals participate in the New Principals Intensive that prepares them for entry into their school.

A majority of current superintendents and network leaders had served in various other managerial roles under past district structures. Many of them had been principals, and were selected on the basis of a general assessment of their strength as school leaders. Interestingly, principals are also involved in the process of selecting network leaders, a feature meant to reinforce the idea that networks and network leaders are ultimately accountable to the principals and schools they serve.

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[6] The powers and duties of community superintendents in New York City are set forth in New York Education Law (section 2590-f). By law, each community school district must have a superintendent, selected and appointed by the chancellor in accordance with a regulation the chancellor has promulgated.

[7] Five of these networks are managed by external Partnership Service Organizations (PSOs) under contract with the New York City Department of Education.

[8] It was reported to the site visit team that some principals were assigned to networks based on availability, and that principals sometimes faced difficulty changing networks.

Network leaders report to cluster leaders, and receive support and professional development through network leader institutes held six times during the year and through cluster-based meetings—although the structure, frequency, and focus of these meetings vary from cluster to cluster. Network leaders also report participating in citywide professional development three to four times a year devoted to district instructional priorities such as common core standards implementation and teacher effectiveness initiatives (i.e., the Children First Intensive).

New superintendents, meanwhile, receive professional development through novice superintendent institutes held every other month, and then through a second year institute held every other month. In addition, monthly team meetings for all superintendents are dedicated to covering topics related to instruction and leadership development. Superintendents and network leaders also meet together four times during the school year to strengthen their understanding of shared work.

Network leaders are evaluated on both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness—measures including the performance of the schools they support. Principal surveys are also a small part of this evaluation process. Once a final score is calculated, networks are then ranked based on effectiveness, with the expectation that the lowest-scoring networks may be disbanded. Superintendents, however, are not directly assessed on measures of school performance.

The powers and duties of principals of New York City schools include school-based budgeting, staff development, and student support services. In addition, community superintendents may give community district principals additional powers, including hiring assistant principals; hiring nonsupervisory employees; approving textbooks and instructional materials; and initiating disciplinary charges against tenured teachers and supervisors.

**Prince George's County Public Schools**
Principals in Prince George's County Public Schools are evaluated by one of 14 instructional directors who oversee no more than 15 schools each. Schools are grouped and assigned to an instructional director by grade levels, either K-8 or high schools. These instructional directors have offices staffed with only a secretary and have limited budget authority. They serve as a bridge to other central office departments and between schools, brokering resources and working to facilitate and support the individual growth of principals. This support includes modeling, mentoring, and coaching, with an intense focus on instructional improvement, teacher evaluation, and data analysis.

In addition to the support they receive from instructional directors, new principals are assigned coaches that are housed in the curriculum office and the Office of Talent Development. New principals are also assigned a resident principal as mentor. These principal mentors have received professional development though the School Leaders

Network (SLN), and some of the principal mentors have been awarded national certification as a principal through the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) mentor certification program.

A majority of the current instructional directors were principals until they were promoted in spring 2011. They were selected on the basis of a proven track record as an instructional leader, strength in building a strong instructional team, a deep understanding of what should occur in a school, and how to improve student performance in schools. Each of the instructional directors reports to one of three associate superintendents, who report to the deputy superintendent for academics.

A weeklong induction period helped to orient the instructional directors to their role and responsibilities. All 14 instructional directors meet as a team for bimonthly professional development, followed by smaller subgroup meetings within their individual areas. In addition, the instructional directors have monthly training coordinated by the Office of Talent Development, and each is assigned a mentor as an additional element to this monthly training program. They also participate in a summer retreat each year. Each associate superintendent meets one-on-one with the instructional director on a monthly basis.

Instructional directors are evaluated on a framework consisting of five domains: principal management, teacher effectiveness, school improvement, professional development, and systems operations. Each domain includes approximately eight indicators, with performance descriptors at the "developing," "proficient," and "distinguished" levels for each. The associate superintendents, in collaboration with the instructional directors, developed a draft rubric of key differences between proficient and distinguished. The instructional directors use this rubric to benchmark their individual practice. This allows the associate superintendents to conduct more focused conversations about how the instructional director is doing his or her job.

Principals in Prince George's County partner with the Division of Human Resources to recruit and select staff for their buildings. Under the district's student-based budgeting initiative, principals develop budgets for assigned funds based on guidelines from central office. Principals have authority to determine how to spend their money within defined budget categories.

Table 1 summarizes the general structural features of the principal advisory systems in the six site visit districts. Table 2 summarizes the selection, professional development, and evaluation of principal supervisors in the six site visit districts.

Table 1. Structural features of the principal supervisory systems of the six site visit districts

| District | Principal supervisors | Number of supervisors/ schools covered | Support staff | Lines of report |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charlotte-Mecklenburg | Zone Superintendents | Six zone superintendents oversee between 16 and 40 schools each. | Zone superintendents have executive directors that serve as their second in command and are focused on instruction. There are also various curriculum and operational specialists in the zone offices, although the composition of these staffs varies from zone to zone. | Zone superintendents report to the CAO, who reports to the superintendent. |
| Denver | Instructional Superintendents/ Executive Directors (for turnaround schools) (IS/ED) | Thirteen IS/EDs oversee between six and 20 schools each. | IS/EDs have a staff of two "partners"—a data analysis partner and a school improvement partner. However, these two positions are being eliminated and replaced by an instructional support partner. A number of IS/EDs also currently have deputies, and the district will be providing these deputies more widely to all elementary IS/EDs in the 2013-14 school year.<br><br>Each IS/ED also has assigned partners in various departments within the central office, including human resources, finance and budget, special education, etc. | IS/EDs report to either the assistant superintendent for elementary education or the assistant superintendent for post-secondary readiness, who both report to the superintendent. |
| Gwinnett County | Area Superintendents | Five area superintendents oversee about 25 schools each. | Area superintendents have no direct support staff. | Area superintendents report to the associate superintendent of school leadership and operations, who reports to the superintendent. |

*(Table 1. continued)*

| District | Principal supervisors | Number of supervisors/ schools covered | Support staff | Lines of report |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hillsborough County | Area Leadership Directors (ALD) | Eight ALDs oversee roughly 30 schools each. | ALD offices are generally staffed with a secretary, an ESE (exceptional student education) supervisor, a staffing coordinator, an RtI specialist, a curriculum specialist, and a number of other operational staff in areas such as transportation, budget, and food services. Although they aren't support staff, per se, instructional coaches also report to ALDs and often provide instructional support and professional development. | ALDs report to the assistant superintendent for administration who reports to the superintendent. |
| New York City | Superintendents/ Network Leaders | Forty community/high school superintendents oversee between 20 and 67 schools each. Sixty network leaders provide support to between 25 and 35 schools each. | Each superintendent has two staff members to support administrative, community, and family concerns.<br><br>Each network leader oversees a staff of about 15 that includes instructional and operational specialists. These staffs vary in composition and structure from network to network. On the instructional side, there are typically content specialists, specialists in areas such as ELLs and students with disabilities, and achievement coaches, while operational staff include specialists in areas such as human resources or budgeting. | Superintendents report to the senior supervising superintendent, who reports to the CAO.<br><br>Network leaders report to cluster leaders, who also report to the CAO. |
| Prince George's County | Instructional Directors | Fourteen instructional directors oversee up to 15 schools each. | Instructional directors have offices staffed with a secretary. | Instructional directors report to one of three associate superintendents, who report to the CAO. |

## Table 2. Selection, professional development, and evaluation of principal supervisors in the six site visit districts

| District | Selection | Professional development | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Charlotte-Mecklenburg | Zone superintendents are selected by a cross-division committee—including the deputy superintendent, the chief human resources officer, a zone superintendent, and often others—on the basis of strong leadership skills, instructional expertise, and the ability to manage schools. | Zone superintendents receive ongoing support and professional development during their weekly meetings as a group. Any additional professional development is driven by their supervisor and based on specific areas of need. | Zone superintendents are evaluated using an instrument that includes multiple student achievement measures such as graduation rates, growth and proficiency on state tests, student attendance, suspension rates, and other measures. These measures are based on individual school performance goals, and align with the district's strategic plan. |
| Denver | Instructional superintendents and executive directors (IS/EDs) are hired by the superintendent on the basis of having a strong track record of success in the schools they formerly led, as well as the ability to take on expanded leadership roles and to collaborate with principals and peers within various central office departments. | IS/EDs receive training on the Denver framework for effective teaching, and previously received training from a private consultant that involved classroom visits and observations. In the 2012-13 school year, the district provided quarterly "off-site" meeting days, facilitated by an external specialist, and about two-thirds of instructional superintendents took advantage of executive coaches provided to them by the district. | Evaluations of IS/EDs are conducted through the district's employee performance management system and employ an individual goal-setting process based partly on the progress of schools under their supervision, as defined by movement of schools between levels in the performance framework. |
| Gwinnett County | Area superintendents are selected by a cross-division panel based on their effectiveness as school leaders as well as their ability to work collaboratively and to build relationships. | Area superintendents receive support primarily through bimonthly meetings with their supervisor and receive professional development through monthly leadership development meetings. They also participate in various professional development programs, including the Public Education Leadership Program at Harvard University and district-level leadership seminars. | Area superintendents are evaluated using the same weighted school assessments that are used to evaluate principals. Specifically, they are evaluated on the progress of their five lowest-performing schools, along with one to three additional schools selected in collaboration with the associate superintendent. The results of the weighted school assessment are aggregated to produce an overall measurement of progress in specific achievement categories. |

*(Table 2. continued)*

| District | Selection | Professional development | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hillsborough County | Area leadership directors (ALDs) are selected by the superintendent on the basis of their prior work as school leaders. | ALDs received professional development from the New Teacher Center, which provided coaches who spent time with ALDs in the field, working with them on their coaching skills and on developing leadership skills. ALDs also receive some coaching and instructional leadership development from the principal instructional coaches. | ALDs are assessed on their progress toward meeting instructional and operational goals they set themselves, as well as on their ability to work with principals and perform principal evaluations. More formal evaluation procedures are under development. |
| New York City | Superintendents and network leaders are selected on the basis of their strength as school leaders. Principals are also involved in the process of selecting network leaders. | New superintendents receive professional development through novice superintendent institutes held every other month, and then through a second year institute held every other month. In addition, monthly team meetings are dedicated to covering topics related to teaching and learning and leadership development.<br><br>Network leaders receive support and professional development through network leader institutes held six times during the year and cluster-based meetings—although the structure, frequency, and focus of these meetings vary from cluster to cluster. Network leaders also report participating in citywide professional development three to four times a year devoted to district instructional priorities.<br><br>Network leaders and superintendents meet together four times during the school year to strengthen their understanding of shared work. | Network leaders are evaluated on both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness— measures including the performance of their schools. Principal surveys are also a small part of this evaluation process. Once a final score is calculated, networks are then ranked based on effectiveness, with the expectation that the lowest-scoring networks may be disbanded.<br><br>Superintendents, however, are not directly assessed on measures of school performance. |
| Prince George's County | Instructional directors are selected on the basis of a proven track record as an instructional leader, strength in building a strong instructional team, a deep understanding of what should occur in a school, and how to improve student performance in schools. | Instructional directors receive professional development through bimonthly team and area-specific meetings. In addition, instructional directors have monthly training coordinated by the Office of Talent Development, and each is assigned a mentor. They also participate in a summer retreat each year. | Instructional directors are evaluated on a framework consisting of five domains: principal management, teacher effectiveness, school improvement, professional development, and systems operations. Each domain includes approximately eight indicators with performance descriptors at the "developing," "proficient," and "distinguished" levels for each. |

## CROSS-DISTRICT OBSERVATIONS

### District Structures

As principals have transitioned into instructional leadership roles, districts across the country have sought to update or overhaul their principal evaluation and supervisory systems to better support, monitor, and assess principal performance. Of course, how these supervisory systems are structured varies widely.

To begin with, districts differed in how far removed principals are from the superintendent or chancellor in the reporting structure. Among the six site visit districts, principals in Denver, Hillsborough County, Gwinnett County, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg are each two administrative levels away from the superintendent, while three layers separate principals from district leadership in Prince George's County and New York City. The implications of these structuring decisions, however, remain unclear, and the different approaches do not appear connected to the level of autonomy or oversight granted to principals in a particular district.

In addition, reporting structures and the organizational placement of principal supervisors varied from district to district. In some systems, like Charlotte-Mecklenburg, New York City, and Prince George's County, principal supervisors report up to the chief academic officer, while in others, such as Gwinnett County and Hillsborough County, they are housed within operational units.

Again, the implications of these specific reporting structures are unclear, although having principal support and evaluation functions positioned alongside curriculum and instruction or teaching and learning units appears more aligned with the instructional leadership role prescribed to principal supervisors in many districts.

Regardless of the specific structure, what appears most important in ensuring that principal supervisors have access to the resources they need to function effectively are *collaboration* and clear lines of communication with various central office divisions. Many districts seek to strategically connect the work of principal supervisors to the work of curriculum and instruction through established information-sharing procedures and multiple configurations of staff meetings. For example, in addition to regular meetings with their peers in the curriculum and instruction, English acquisition, and teaching and learning divisions, instructional superintendents and executive directors in Denver also serve alongside curriculum staff on "priority committees"— cross-functional committees of four to six people tasked with addressing critical district goals, such as common core implementation and teacher evaluation.

In other districts collaboration is driven less by formal mechanisms than by personal relationships and the general expectation that staff will collaborate. One senior staff member explained to us that "relationships drive everything here," and that "relationship-building is a skill that principal supervisors need to bring with them to the position and to continue to develop in order to succeed at their job."

But while relationship building is certainly an important professional skill to emphasize among principal supervisors and district staff, such informal structures can also leave a system vulnerable to factors such as inconsistent expertise and staff turnover. The same interviewee emphasized that, "in this district if you don't do your best to nurture relationships, it's a problem. Coordination between the two sides of the house is an ongoing job." In the same vein, a senior staff member in the leadership development division of another district admitted "Our collaboration with [principal supervisors] is not as thoughtful as it should be."

### Selection of Principal Supervisors

According to the survey, the tenure of principal supervisors in urban districts across the country is fairly short. The average amount of time principal supervisors have been in their positions was three years, the median was two, and 23 respondents reported that they have been in their positions for only one year. This suggests that this position has been adapted or reinvented recently in many districts, or that turnover in the positions has been extensive.

In fact, the site visits revealed a fluid picture of staff in shifting roles and evolving district structures. In New York City, while superintendents and network leaders may be relatively new to their current positions, many are transitioning from former management roles under the previous structure. Area leadership directors in Hillsborough County are also transitioning into new instructional leadership roles—the same group was previously called area directors, performing a more operations-focused management function within the district. In contrast, area superintendents in Gwinnett County are newly selected leaders from the principal ranks who have only been in this position since the beginning of 2012.

A large majority of principal supervisors in both the survey and the site visit districts were former principals. According to the survey, 97 percent of principal supervisors had at least two years of experience as a principal, while 42 percent had over two years of experience as a principal coach or mentor and 95 percent had over two years of experience as a teacher. Few had experience as either a human resources administrator, an operations administrator, or a central office instructional administrator.

Site visits revealed a wide variety of processes and criteria employed for identifying staff for this role. Despite the premium put on their track record as school leaders, few districts select principal supervisors solely on the basis of explicit results and measurable student achievement gains. Districts generally select principal supervisors according to a more broad assessment of their effectiveness as school leaders in advancing student progress along with various other leadership skills, such as the ability to build relationships, to collaborate effectively both with their peers and across central office divisions, and to take on more demanding leadership roles, handling the needs of a large number of schools. Staff in Gwinnett County offered the explanation that, in selecting principal supervisors, they were "looking for people who can build relationships and ask questions." In addition, these principal supervisors were "highly respected by their peers, so that gives credibility to their new evaluative role." An interviewee in Hillsborough County, meanwhile, explained to the site visit team, "We grow our own. We have known them since they were teachers and principals, which gives us good information on the skills they have when they apply for these positions."

The ways districts select principal supervisors, however, may lead to uneven instructional expertise among supervisors within districts. Site visit interviews with principals and others revealed the widespread perception that, while some supervisors bring very strong instructional backgrounds and skills with them to the position, the quality and expertise of those in this position can vary, leading to uneven support for principals and varying degrees of principal confidence in their supervisors. In describing the challenge of nurturing the instructional leadership skills of principal supervisors, a senior staff member in one district explained, "We are trying to create instructional leaders with people that may or may not have been strong in this area to begin with. So it is unclear whether it is possible to address this through training."

Finally, the procedures and criteria for selecting principals and principal supervisors are often independent of each other, and while several districts involve principal supervisors in the process of selecting principals, only one district we visited—New York City—incorporated principals in the process of selecting and hiring principal supervisors.[9]

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[9] Principals in New York City are involved in the process of hiring network leaders, who are responsible for supporting—not evaluating—them.

**Prescribed Role of Principal Supervisors**

According to the survey of Council districts conducted for this project, the top five tasks that principal supervisors reported performing in 2012 were visiting schools, convening principals to discuss instructional issues, evaluating principals, coaching principals, and conducting professional development with principals. To support principals, supervisors reported being involved in the following top five activities in 2012: conversing with principals about student performance data, visiting classrooms with principals, conversing with principals about their performance, conversing with principals about teacher performance, and assisting principals in responding to issues raised by parents or the community. All of these activities except spending time responding to parent/community issues have increased or stayed the same over the last two years. Other tasks that increased included facilitating professional development on teaching and learning and engaging in teacher evaluation observations with principals.

While most districts vest their principal supervisors with both support and evaluation responsibilities,[10] one of the key distinctions between districts is the *nature* of the support that principal supervisors are expected to provide. For example, in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, zone superintendents and their staffs are charged with providing direct technical assistance to principals. Similarly, in New York City, district staff described how networks provide principals with an extended support staff of operational and instructional specialists, although principals are also encouraged to pursue other avenues of support as well. In Gwinnett County, on the other hand, district staff described area superintendents as "brokers of central office resources." The prescribed support role of principal supervisors in turn drives other facets of the supervisory structure such as staffing for principal supervisors, discussed later in this report.

Despite the job description or intended instructional role of principal supervisors in a given district, site visit interviews revealed that principal supervisors often play multiple roles and must juggle competing demands for their time. Principal supervisors are expected to be in schools regularly, to provide instructional leadership, and to be intimately aware of and responsive to principal needs and issues as they arise in real-time. At the same time, staff members in these supervisory positions play an important role within the central office, participating in a number of district planning and policy meetings and handling substantial oversight responsibilities related to school administration and operations. In fact, survey respondents reported that their district administrative and compliance responsibilities have actually increased over the last two years at the same time that they are being pressed to become instructional leaders.

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[10] Only one site visit district—New York City—strictly separates these two functions. However, the dual evaluation/support function of principal supervisors in other districts did not appear to create a conflict of interest, according to interviews with district staff.

These competing demands lead to a clear gap between the aspirational and the actual uses of time for those serving in this position. Interviews with principal supervisors across districts reinforced the notion that they would like to spend more of their time in schools but are often pulled into district-level meetings or must devote their attention to handling crises and a multitude of compliance and administrative issues. This is also reflected in the survey, where principal supervisors identified "more coaching time" and "fewer meetings" as the top two categories of additional support they need to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement.

**Deployment of Principal Supervisors**

Districts most often group schools together and match them with principal supervisors geographically. While having schools in the same vicinity may facilitate school visits—a growing expectation for principal supervisors—this strategy does not always yield supervisors that are well matched to the needs of the schools assigned to them.

In fact, interviews with principals in multiple districts revealed that principal supervisors sometimes lack the background and expertise to effectively and equitably support all of the schools they supervise. For example, a principal supervisor with experience at the high school level may be responsible for overseeing elementary school principals, or a principal supervisor may not prepared to support struggling schools or schools with large ELL populations.

Both Denver and Prince George's County, on the other hand, matched a majority of their schools to principal supervisors according to grade level. Denver also has two clusters of turnaround schools overseen by executive directors, who play the same role as instructional superintendents. Similarly, Charlotte-Mecklenburg groups its special education, Title I, and Project L.I.F.T.[11] schools together.[12,13] And while principals in New York City are evaluated by superintendents assigned geographically, the system allows them to self-select into support networks based on their individual needs and priorities—subject to availability—independent of their geographic location.

Only one district we visited—Gwinnett County—explicitly avoids having principal supervisors oversee their former schools.

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[11] The Leadership and Investment for Transformation project, or Project L.I.F.T., is a philanthropic initiative that provides additional assistance and services for Charlotte-Mecklenburg students in the West Charlotte corridor— an area with the lowest graduation rates in the city.

[12] In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the assistant superintendent of exceptional children programs also serves as the supervisor for principals of the district's dedicated special education schools.

[13] As of June 2013, Charlotte-Mecklenburg replaced its six zones with seven learning communities overseen by community superintendents. While Project LIFT and ELL schools are still grouped together, Title I schools are not. The learning communities are defined primarily around feeder patterns.

Finally, the survey and site visits suggested that principal supervisors are each assigned to a large number of schools. Survey respondents reported that principal supervisors oversee an average of 24 schools each, with a median of 18. However, in the districts we visited, we saw some much wider spans of control. In Hillsborough County, area leadership directors each handled about 30 schools, while budget cuts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have resulted in some zone superintendents overseeing as many as 40 schools.[14] In New York, superintendents are responsible for evaluating principals in upwards of 67 schools, although the networks that provide support to principals have lower numbers of schools under their purview—25 to 35 on average.

In any case, this means that supervisors are generally juggling the needs of large numbers of schools. And principals and principal supervisors repeatedly cited the fact that low-performing schools often take up the largest share of a supervisor's time.

Given that large spans of control have important implications for how principal supervisors are able to perform their prescribed role, some districts have sought to address this issue. In Prince George's County, instructional directors supervise no more than 15 principals each, helping to reinforce the expectation that they spend time in each of their schools helping principals develop the skills needed to drive instructional improvement. In Denver, another district where each principal supervisor already oversees a relatively low number of schools, the central office piloted the use of deputies provided to instructional superintendents. These deputies take on responsibility for a number of schools themselves, lowering the span of control for supervisors even further to 10 schools or less. In the 2013-14 school year deputies will be provided for all elementary-level instructional superintendents.

### Staffing for Principal Supervisors

One of the critical differences in the way districts structure their principal supervisory systems is the level of staff support provided to principal supervisors. Staffing is often driven directly by a district's vision of the work of principal supervisors. For example, network leaders in New York and zone superintendents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are expected to be able to handle principal support needs at the network or zone level. It follows that each zone office and network is staffed with a relatively large number of instructional and operational specialists that principals have direct access to as issues or needs arise.

In contrast, Gwinnett County area superintendents have neither a staff nor any budget authority, as their role is to connect principals to central office resources. Gwinnett County made this decision with the intention of freeing up more time for area superintendents to spend in schools.

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[14] The average number of schools overseen by each community superintendent has decreased under the new system of learning communities.

In Denver, the district is currently seeking to restructure staffing as a means to better support instructional superintendents and their work. As discussed above, after piloting the use of deputies to oversee schools and lower the number of schools each instructional superintendent handles directly, the district will be providing deputies to all of its elementary-level instructional superintendents during the 2013-14 school year. Moreover, the two staff members currently assigned to instructional superintendents/executive directors—a data analysis partner and a school improvement partner—will be replaced by an instructional support partner that the district is hoping will provide more instruction-focused support.

**Support and Professional Development for Principal Supervisors**
Over 95 percent of principal supervisors who responded to the survey reported receiving professional development from their respective districts, while 50 percent reported receiving professional development from professional organizations and 36 percent from contractors or publishers.

Specifically, 60 percent of principal supervisors reported that they received professional development in the following areas to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement:

- Reviewing school (student) performance data

- Observing classrooms with a focus on student learning and student work

- Understanding the shift in reading and writing expectations and instruction due to new academic standards

- Using student performance data to improve classroom instruction

- Conducting principal evaluations

- Understanding the shift in mathematics expectations and instruction due to new academic standards

However, the site visits revealed that much of this professional development is ad hoc in nature—it is generally not part of a systematic, sustained program of professional learning and is not always focused enough on expanding principal supervisors' knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

Principal supervisors in one district, for instance, described going out and finding various training seminars and literature on school leadership on their own and then trying to incorporate this into their work as best they could. However, there was little indication of how these materials or approaches were vetted or whether they were consistent with the district's theory of action for school improvement. In another district, professional development opportunities were selected and offered to principal

supervisors on an individual basis as the need arose. This may be an effective short-term strategy for addressing individual needs, but it is not indicative of a long-term vision for continuous growth aligned to district needs and priorities.

Interviews with district staff at various levels also indicated that professional development is generally not seen as sufficient to support principal supervisors as the instructional leaders they are envisioned to be. Much of the professional development cited by principal supervisors and central office leaders across districts focused on leadership development—not on providing principal supervisors with a deep understanding of how to identify and support high quality instruction.



This was particularly evident in the area of preparing principal supervisors to lead the transition to the Common Core State Standards. In some of the districts we visited, principal supervisors lacked a strong connection to the curriculum division, and this limited their access to common core-focused professional development and resources. In other districts, principal supervisors were so oversubscribed that seeking out information and a deep understanding of the instructional shifts required by the common core was clearly not "on their radar screen" and not seen as an integral part of their role as the instructional leaders of schools. In fact, only 10 percent of the principal supervisors surveyed reported needing more support with the common core standards—a number that more likely points to a lack of understanding of the level of knowledge and skill necessary to lead common core implementation than to an overabundance of common core-aligned professional development.

Moreover, a great deal of professional development is offered by external providers or institutions of higher education without the active involvement of the district in ensuring that the programming is aligned with explicit district needs and improvement strategies. There is also little evidence that professional development is regularly and rigorously evaluated for its effectiveness in supporting principal supervisors and advancing teaching and learning.

The onboarding process for principal supervisors is also often limited, although there are exceptions. In Gwinnett County, area superintendents were given three weeks of training at the central office during which they were oriented to the various district divisions and the resources available—good preparation for their future role as brokers of these resources. This also gave the district a chance to clarify for staff throughout the organization the role the area superintendents were expected to play and the process by which resources and support would be provided to principals.

Finally, while a quarter of survey respondents indicated that they had received some sort of professional development from their state or state regional service center, interviews offered no evidence that states play any significant role in supporting or developing training targeted for principal supervisors. When asked about the resources, professional development opportunities, or guidance provided by the state in preparing and supporting continuous improvement among principals and principal supervisors, one senior district staff member said, "We can't wait on the state for anything." This sentiment was echoed in another district, where staff reported to the site visit team that the state had sent representatives to learn from district practices and policies, which were well ahead of statewide talent development and evaluation efforts.

### Evaluation of Principal Supervisors

As districts across the country are implementing evaluation systems to hold teachers and principals responsible for the achievement of students, they are also moving in the direction of more rigorous evaluations for principal supervisors. However, evaluations of principal supervisors are generally not yet as well developed as evaluations for principals and teachers. For example, districts by and large have not articulated an explicit set of principal supervisor competencies on which to base evaluations, although some of the districts we visited, including Denver and Gwinnett County, appear to be at various stages in the process of creating them.

It is a promising development that many of the districts we visited identified school performance gains as an emerging component in the evaluation of principal supervisors. In Gwinnett County, for instance, area superintendents are evaluated using the same weighted school assessments that are used to evaluate principals. These weighted school assessments look at performance indicators including student performance on state tests and graduation rates. Zone superintendents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are also evaluated using an instrument that includes a student achievement measure based on components such as graduation rates, growth and proficiency on state tests, student attendance, suspension rates, and other measures. These measures are based on individual school performance goals, and are aligned with the district's strategic plan.

However, these are somewhat rare examples of a principal supervisor evaluation being tied to school performance objectives and district strategic goals. In one district, senior staff explained that principal supervisors were not evaluated on the basis of school performance because "they (principal supervisors) aren't tied to the attainment of school progress goals in a deep way." Instead, "they are judged by how they lead, by how well they direct and support principals."

In fact, even when evaluation systems for principal supervisors incorporate school performance measures, they rarely involve specific performance targets. In more than one district we visited, "progress" was defined merely as movement upward in achievement scores or levels, or even achievement relative to other, similar schools.

**Principal Preparation, Selection, and Development**

As participants in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative, the districts we visited had each made significant strides in articulating principal leadership standards and developing and selecting school leaders that meet these standards. While principal supervisors are rarely charged with hiring or even reassigning principals, some districts do actively involve principal supervisors in the preparation and selection processes. In Denver, for example, instructional superintendents and executive directors play an important role in the district's multi-layered screening and hiring procedures, participating in interviews and school walk-throughs with principal candidates. In districts such as Gwinnett County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, principal supervisors participate in principal training programs so that they are familiar with the individual skills and strengths of future principals.

A number of districts have also pursued collaborative relationships with outside organizations and local universities to help ensure the alignment of principal preparation programs with district needs and expectations. New York City, for example, has developed a portfolio of principal preparation programs that include the NYC Leadership Academy; New Leaders; LEAP; Bank Street College; Teachers College, Columbia University; Relay Graduate School of Education; and Fordham University. The New York City Department of Education is also pursuing stronger collaboration among the partners and has instituted a Wallace Inquiry Team that brings partners together to share practice and work on common issues.

Similarly, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has partnered with the national nonprofit organization New Leaders to develop a training program aimed specifically at preparing principals to support its high-needs schools. The district also worked closely with Winthrop University to develop Leaders for Tomorrow, a master's-level degree program that requires students to complete three internships in different schools in order to provide hands-on training among Charlotte's diverse students.

In fact, a number of principal preparation programs offer these types of internship or residency opportunities, including the Learn to Lead principal residency program in Denver and the Aspiring Principal Program in Gwinnett County. In New York City, all principal preparation programs offer a range of residency or internship programs. Some, such as LEAP, Bank Street, and Teachers College, have the participant remain in their current school and others, such as the NYC Leadership Academy and New Leaders, have the participants conduct their residency in a new site.

In their principal preparation efforts, districts are also seeking to identify and nurture the next generation of school leaders even earlier in their careers. Some districts strategically develop and support assistant principals and even current teachers as a source of future principals, assigning them instructional leadership roles and providing a training pipeline for career advancement. In Hillsborough County, the Preparing New Principals program (PnP) is a two-year program for which assistant principals can apply after three years of successful performance as an assistant principal. The district has also developed a Future Leaders Academy (FLA)—a six-month program designed to prepare teacher leaders who are interested in becoming school principals. And in addition to their Aspiring Principal Program, Gwinnett County has created an Aspiring Leader Program aimed at recruiting and training teachers to become assistant principals.

Alongside more comprehensive principal preparation, principal selection has also evolved into an increasingly rigorous process in many districts. Perhaps most notably, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has created a "talent pool" of all candidates eligible to be hired as a principal or assistant principal in the district. To qualify for the pool, candidates must pass a rigorous screening and selection process—submitting past performance reviews and data that show their impact on student achievement at their current school, as well as participating in interviews and a writing exercise.

### Principal Support

As discussed earlier, districts have endeavored to provide principals with increased levels of instructional and operational support in order to help them assume a stronger instructional leadership role at their school sites. Principal supervisory structures are often the centerpiece of these support systems. As we have seen, some principal supervisors provide direct technical assistance while others function more as brokers of central office resources, able to connect principals to instructional or operational specialists depending on the nature of their needs. And while principal supervisors often handle a large number of schools and have many competing demands for their time, they are clearly working to shift the focus of their support and principal meetings to providing professional learning opportunities related to instruction.

Principal supervisors, however, are only one layer of support provided to principals. For example, each of the six site visit districts shared another important support feature in common: principal coaches. Principal coaches, assigned to novice principals to provide instructional and leadership development, are generally removed from the principal evaluation process altogether and are charged solely with providing support.[15] While the process of matching coaches to principals and the professional development provided to these principal coaches varies from district to district, the coaches themselves are widely perceived to be an invaluable resource—and in some cases to be of more use in terms of providing instructional support than the supervisors themselves.

In Hillsborough County, for example, an extremely strong rotating group of instructional coaches is made up of current principals or administrators on release for three to five years. These instructional coaches provide individualized support and professional development to principals on a weekly basis in their first two years and also "coach up"—providing the district's area leadership directors with instructional leadership development as well. Other districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg, employ both sitting and retired principals as coaches or use external consultants to support novice principals.

However, principal coaches are typically assigned only to novice principals or to principals who are struggling. Few districts have created a coaching corps to support principals throughout their careers. In New York, all first-year principals receive a coach funded by the district. But principals in their second year and beyond can purchase coaching time—usually out of their own school budgets—to continue the support they received as novice principals. But New York City is the only place where we saw this arrangement.

**Principal Evaluation**

On the survey, principal supervisors generally reported having effective principal and assistant principal evaluations in place. Fifty-eight percent of principal supervisors graded their principal evaluation systems as excellent or good (A or B), while 31 percent graded them as average (C) and only 11 percent graded them as poor (D) or very poor (F). Over 80 percent of principal supervisors rated the following components of their principal evaluation systems as being effective or very effective: setting annual principal goals, student performance on state assessments, and having written instruments completed by the principal supervisor.

The site visits, however, indicated that districts vary widely in terms of the perceived validity and utility of the principal evaluation process. For instance, although approximately 96 percent of survey respondents said that the purpose of their district's principal evaluation system was to improve principal effectiveness and 79 percent said

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[15] In one district we visited, principal coaches were informally involved in the principal evaluation process, providing input to principal supervisors.

that the purpose was to identify items for ongoing professional growth for individual principals, interviews with principals and their supervisors in a number of districts revealed that principal evaluation data are not always provided on a sufficiently timely basis to allow for this continuous improvement over the course of a year. Moreover, the usefulness of the evaluation process in promoting professional growth depends on such components as the setting of meaningful performance targets and the frequency of meetings between principals and their supervisors to review progress throughout the year—components that were strong in some systems and very weak in others.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, principals praised their evaluation system as "straightforward, fair, and transparent." One principal explained, "There's a pre-meeting, a mid-year check in, and a post-evaluation meeting. Like our teacher evaluations, it isn't a surprise; you know what is going to be on there."

Principals in another district, however, told the site team that they "get an email and a score, but never any feedback." Given the widespread perception of the lack of utility of these evaluations, principals in this district are counseled to only set "safe, achievable" performance goals—goals that many principals reported did not reflect their real goals and objectives for the school year. "I would never set an official performance goal I hadn't already met," one principal told the site visit team.

Districts also differed in the extent to which principals are evaluated on student achievement, as well as the clarity with which these student achievement measures are calculated and shared with both principals and principal supervisors.

Further, we found that the criteria used to evaluate teachers and principals were rarely aligned. This is consistent with findings from the survey, where 29 percent of respondents reported that principal evaluations of teachers were not included in principal evaluation systems. Also, it is common for evaluation systems for principals and teachers to employ separate processes and to be conducted at different times— adding to the potential for mismatches.

Finally, the survey indicated that few principal evaluation systems included measures related to a principal's ability to retain a school's best teaching talent—often an important component of a district's overall human capital strategy.

# PART II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORY SYSTEMS

In cataloguing the principal supervisory structures of various districts, it is clear that districts have taken very different approaches to supporting both principals and principal supervisors, and the study team observed strengths and weaknesses in how each system operates.

Of course, it is impossible to identify with certainty which approaches are most "effective," as there are currently no available data directly linking specific features of principal supervisory systems to student achievement gains. Moreover, our previous research on school systems that have made the greatest or fastest progress in student performance suggests that organizational structures such as those described in this paper are only relevant *when those structures serve to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning districtwide.*[16]
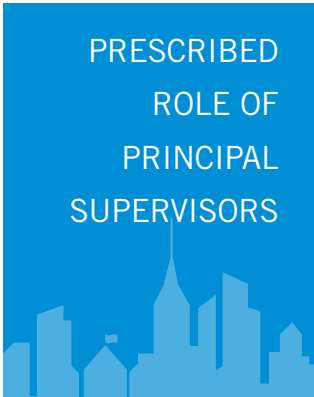
In that vein, based on a combination of our site visits to the six study districts, the survey of 41 districts, and the Council's decades of experience observing and working with large school districts across the country, we sought to determine how internally consistent and well positioned these systems are to support and advance the critical work of principals and principal supervisors.

In other words, based on what we saw—and didn't see—across districts, we have tried to identify those structures and practices that are most likely to result in stronger school leaders, better classroom instruction, and higher student achievement.

We developed nine recommendations for building more effective principal support and supervision systems:

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[16] See *Pieces of the Puzzle: Factors in the Improvement of Urban School Districts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, Council of the Great City Schools, Fall 2011 and *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*, Council of the Great City Schools, September 2002.

## PRESCRIBED ROLE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

**1. Define and clearly communicate throughout the organization the role and required competencies of principal supervisors.**
As districts work to shift their principal support structures to match the increased demand for school-based instructional leadership, staff charged with overseeing principal performance report that they struggle with mixed messages and conflicting mandates. While many districts envision a strong and growing instructional leadership role for principal supervisors, in practice these supervisors often still handle extensive administrative oversight responsibilities as vestiges of past structures or roles—and with diminished central office resources.

Moreover, there has been a gap in most districts between identifying core competencies for principals and teachers, and codifying those competencies required of principal supervisors. This type of framework is crucial for shaping a district's work regarding principal oversight.

Certainly, many districts are still in the process of transition. But in managing the change to new structures and expectations, **districts should clearly define the role and required competencies of principal supervisors and communicate this message so that staff members throughout the organization understand the resulting shifts in work and responsibilities.**

These competencies need not be based on a set of uniform standards applied to all districts. Instead, **a well-defined set of principal supervisor competencies should be driven by each district's strategic priorities, organizational structure, and vision of the role of these leaders. These competencies should then drive the process of selecting, training, and evaluating principal supervisors.**

PRESCRIBED
ROLE,
DEPLOYMENT
& STAFFING OF
PRINCIPALS
SUPERVISORS

## 2. Narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control.

To reinforce the instructional role of principal supervisors, districts also need to address the competing demands on their time, which limit their capacity to effectively fulfill this function. Both the survey and the site visits revealed that principal supervisors typically oversee a large number of schools. As discussed earlier, principal supervisors in many districts also handle a substantial amount of administrative and operational duties such as overseeing school inventories and budgets, approving field trips, and responding to day-to-day parent requests and issues. In fact, principal supervisors indicated that the number of administrative and compliance duties they face has actually increased over the last two years, at the same time that they are being asked to take on increasing instructional leadership roles.

It follows that principals, principal supervisors, and other district staff report that those in this role are not able to spend as much time as they need to in schools providing instructional guidance and leadership—particularly for those schools that are not classified as "struggling." Interviews also suggested that these wide spans of control may also lead to an evaluation process that is less reflective of principal performance and less useful in directing resources to help principals improve.

To the extent possible, districts should **narrow the responsibilities and spans of control facing principal supervisors so that they can provide principals with individualized support and oversight. Principal supervisors should also be provided with an appropriate level of staffing and resources, given their intended function.** Of course, this may prove a challenge for districts facing budget shortages that necessitate dual roles for many staff. But recognizing the overarching importance of a principal supervisor's evaluation and support function, some districts have created or reallocated resources to maximize the time these supervisors have to spend with each principal they oversee.

As discussed previously, Denver has sought to lower the number of schools each of its instructional superintendents oversees by providing them with deputies designed to take over responsibility for a number of schools. In contrast, area superintendents in Gwinnett County have no staff or budget authority—a policy deliberately designed to limit their management responsibilities and increase the time they spend providing site-based support to principals.

Districts have also sought to ease principal supervisors' non instructional management responsibilities through centralized or school-based staffing structures. In Prince George's County, associate superintendents ensure that instructional directors are focused on supporting schools rather than spending significant amounts of time working on committees or attending meetings at the central office. Instructional superintendents in Denver, meanwhile, report relying on structures such as middle and high school parent liaisons and the Office of Community Engagement, which reaches out to inform and support communities effected by district initiatives in order to minimize issues and concerns. Similarly, Hillsborough County has created a central operations center that is designed to deflect a certain amount of the operational workload of principals and principal supervisors.

SELECTION OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS, DEPLOYMENT OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

**3. Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the needs of schools.**
Interviews with principals across districts indicated that the quality and level of support they received from their supervisors sometimes varied based on the background and expertise of those supervisors. For example, in those districts where principal supervisors are expected to provide hands-on technical assistance, coaching, and instructional support to principals, it was not always clear that those hired for these positions or retained in the role had proficient levels of expertise and skill in these areas. And while some districts hold principal supervisors accountable for advancing student achievement in the schools they oversee, few districts reported hiring principal supervisors based on explicit evidence of previous student or school gains in the same types of schools those individuals would oversee.

Based on these findings, it was clear that **the process of selecting and hiring principal supervisors should be closely aligned to the core competencies districts identify for those in this role.**

Moreover, a mismatch of skills and knowledge has resulted in uneven support and oversight of principals in some districts. For example, we spoke with principals who didn't feel their supervisor was equipped to support them because the supervisor lacked experience at a particular grade level, or did not have the skills to support struggling schools or schools with high numbers of English learners. To address these issues, **districts should work to better align the specific skill sets and backgrounds of principal supervisors with the schools they oversee.**

Some districts we visited did employ different strategies for identifying the needs of particular types of schools and assigning supervisors equipped to handle these needs. In Denver, for instance, schools are grouped and assigned to instructional superintendents according to grade level. Elementary, middle, and high schools each have designated supervisors. Turnaround schools are also grouped together into two different zones led by executive directors, who perform the same role as instructional supervisors.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, on the other hand, has attempted to address the issue of matching needs and supervisor experience in part through its executive directors—appointed "deputies" who are selected in order to round out a zone superintendent's background expertise. And in a very different model, New York City allows schools to self-select into support networks that they decide are best positioned to meet their needs.

Of course, geographic diversity can lead to logistical challenges when schools are not grouped according to location. But regardless of the organization of the system or the way schools are grouped, **districts need to ensure that they select—and deploy— principal supervisors that are equipped with the skills and expertise to provide meaningful support to the principals they oversee.**

**SUPPORT & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS**

**4. Provide principal supervisors with the professional development and training they need to assume new instructional leadership roles.** Another vital element in supporting principal supervisors in new instructional leadership roles is professional development. Yet interviews with staff across districts revealed that professional development for principal supervisors is often ad hoc in nature and not sufficiently targeted to the roles supervisors are expected to play. Most principal supervisors interviewed cited team meetings as the primary source of professional learning and support, although the focus on instruction and the degree to which these meetings function as professional learning communities was unclear. Principal supervisors also reported personally seeking out training programs and applying various management texts they had read—activities that may have been helpful but were not a part of a systematic program of professional development. And while supervisors in most districts reported sporadic meetings with curriculum and instruction staff to review various features of the new common core standards, the depth and consistency of these meetings appeared insufficient to prepare them to manage such a momentous transition in their schools.

Based on these findings, the study team concluded that **professional development for principal supervisors should be designed not only to address individual needs as they arise, but also to support continuous growth and improvement.** To begin with, principal supervisors should have access to the professional development offered to principals, whether for their own professional learning purposes or to ensure consistency in the instructional training principals receive from various sources. **Professional development should also take into account the specific roles and competencies a district identifies for its principal supervisors.** For example, if supervisors are expected to coach principals, they should receive support and training on effective coaching strategies and techniques. And if principal supervisors are to provide effective instructional leadership, these professional learning opportunities need to focus on developing skills and knowledge of *instruction*—and evaluated accordingly. This involves not only building familiarity with curriculum and content, but also developing the ability to identify and advance effective instruction at the classroom level.

In fact, on our survey, principal supervisors who reported receiving professional development on observing classrooms with a focus on student work and student learning were also more likely to engage in tasks involving visiting schools, coaching principals, and convening principals to discuss instructional issues.

In the context of the Common Core State Standards, **principal supervisors also need professional development focused on helping them develop a deep knowledge of the instructional shifts required by the new standards, as well as what constitutes evidence of those shifts.** Moreover, principal supervisors will need to develop the skills to support effective instruction and implementation of the common core for a diverse range of students.
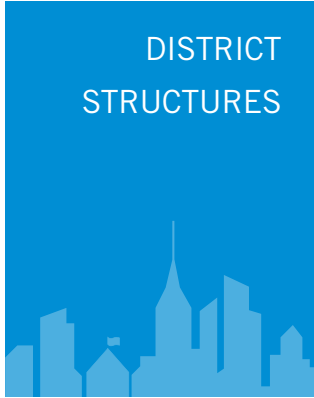
**DISTRICT STRUCTURES**

**5. Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure clear lines of communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and central office staff.** On our site visits to districts, we found that principal supervisors in some districts report up to the chief academic officer, while in other districts they are housed organizationally within operational units. While having principal support and evaluation functions positioned alongside curriculum and instruction or teaching and learning units appears more aligned with the instructional leadership role prescribed to these supervisors in many districts, the study team concluded that *collaboration* and clear lines of communication between principal supervisors and central office curriculum staff matter more in terms of directing resources.

In some districts, this communication is dependent on personal relationships and the general expectation that staff will collaborate. However, such informal structures leave a system vulnerable to factors such as staff turnover. Instead, **districts should strategically connect the work of principal supervisors to the work of curriculum and instruction by pairing the expectation of collaboration with established information-sharing procedures and regular cross-department staff meetings.**

Of course, simply mandating meetings does not automatically yield effective collaboration and can even divert the time that principal supervisors should be spending in schools. Meetings should therefore be driven by a larger communications strategy. To the extent possible, these structured meetings with district staff should also be focused on substantive instructional topics and on deepening principal supervisors' knowledge in areas such as the common core.

**PRINCIPAL SUPPORT**

**6. Provide early and sustained support to new principals in the form of coaches.**
Whatever their various names and even functions across districts, principal coaches provided to novice principals were cited as a consistently strong resource for supporting and developing principal leadership. In Hillsborough County, one principal remarked, "I have never had a meeting with my coach that did not result in an 'aha' moment that has directly improved my practice." This strong corps of principal coaches provides hands-on professional development and instructional support to Hillsborough County principals in their first two years, as well as informally to principal supervisors.

Of course, the coaching systems in each of the site visit districts differed in terms of the selection process and criteria, whom coaches report to, and training for coaches. But in general, principal coaches across districts play less of a mentor role and focus more on developing principals as school leaders. And principals in the site visit districts clearly benefited from receiving individualized, one-on-one professional development from someone without evaluative authority.

This is an important layer of support to offer alongside principal supervisors—and one that is too important to remove past a principal's first year. One district—New York City— did offer principals the opportunity to keep their coaches past the first year, but this required principals to pay for them out of their school budgets. Given the widely-reported value of this resource, districts should dedicate or reallocate resources in order to **provide coaches for new principals for a minimum of their first three years on the job—and to principals who are struggling—to support continued growth and improvement. These coaches should be carefully selected and receive training in effective coaching techniques and in instructional areas such as the Common Core State Standards so that they are prepared to help principals develop as instructional leaders.**

**PRINCIPAL & PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR EVALUATION**

**7. Hold principals—and principal supervisors—accountable for the progress of schools, and ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance.**

The site visits revealed a wide gap among evaluation systems in terms of their capacity—and use—to effectively gauge progress and the impact principals and principal supervisors are making in schools. While some principals reported that their evaluations provided them with clear, comprehensive data that helped them assess and improve their practice, others reported goal-setting and evaluation processes that amounted to meaningless compliance exercises.

Specifically, one of the defining features of evaluation systems was the strength or weakness of the connection to student progress. While each of the six districts tied principal performance reviews to student progress on some level, the districts varied in how significant and explicit this connection was. Moreover, districts differed in terms of whether or not evaluations of *principal supervisors* were tied to the progress of schools, among other measures of effectiveness. In fact, the process and measures used to assess principal supervisors were completely independent of teacher and principal evaluations in most districts.

**As instructional leaders charged with supporting principals and improving school performance, districts should ensure that principal supervisors are held responsible for student gains.** These quantitative measures should be accompanied by multiple other measures of job performance and success and account for the challenges of working with high-needs schools. Nevertheless, **principal supervisor evaluations should reflect the same expectations and level of transparency with which principal and teacher performance is assessed.** For example, if principals are expected to set and meet rigorous performance targets, principal supervisors should also be evaluated on the basis of progress toward these performance targets.

**Principal and principal supervisor evaluations should also reflect progress toward meeting the district's strategic objectives.** For example, survey results indicate that principal evaluation systems rarely incorporate such measures as teacher retention—an important indicator if a district is committed to developing and retaining top teachers. Similarly, principal supervisors should be assessed on their effectiveness in providing principals with actionable performance evaluation data and targeted professional development opportunities—the stated strategic purposes of most principal evaluation systems.

PRINCIPAL
EVALUATION

**8. Provide clear, timely, and actionable evaluation data to principals.**
Interviews with principals and their supervisors in a number of districts also revealed that principal evaluation data are not always provided on a sufficiently timely basis to effectively support improvement. Some principals reported receiving final evaluation data or scores well into the summer months, and without having had an opportunity to meet or discuss their work with their supervisor over the course of a school year. This lack of transparency and timeliness not only limits the usefulness of the evaluation process, it erodes principals' faith in the validity and value of evaluation data.

To ensure that evaluation systems are best positioned to improve principal performance, **districts should provide principals with timely and valid formative data at multiple points during the year to allow them to gauge how they are doing and to identify how they can improve their practice.** Principal supervisors should play a key role in this process, working with principals to address areas of need and providing targeted professional development opportunities. For example, in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, zone superintendents meet with principals at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to discuss their growth plan, assess progress, and set professional development goals.

**Districts should also work to build understanding and buy-in for evaluation systems through clear communication and training for principals and their supervisors.** Principal supervisors in particular should be equipped to explain performance measures and the process by which principal performance is calculated and assessed. The key is for the evaluation process to go beyond a compliance exercise to one that is widely understood and perceived as useful—not only for gauging principal performance, but as an opportunity for principals to reflect on and improve their practice.

**9. Commit district resources and engage external partners in the process of developing future school and district leaders.**
As discussed in the previous section, a number of districts have developed a dual strategy of developing homegrown leadership training programs and pursuing collaborative relationships with outside organizations and local universities. **In working with outside partners, districts should ensure close alignment with district needs and expectations.** Principal training programs also increasingly incorporate school residencies and other internship opportunities—features that help prepare future principals to effectively function in diverse and demanding urban school settings.

**Districts can also benefit from engaging key staff, such as principal supervisors, in their leadership development strategies.** In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Gwinnett County, and Denver, principal supervisors are actively involved in principal development programs, as well as in the principal selection and hiring processes. This early engagement helps to familiarize principal supervisors with future principals and enables them to identify the best-suited candidates for various principal positions as they become available. It also serves to streamline and connect the selection and evaluation processes, solidifying a supervisor's support and oversight role.

Moreover, to ensure a strong pipeline of future school leaders, **districts should focus on cultivating strong school leaders even earlier in their careers.** A number of districts we visited have developed training programs aimed at advancing the leadership skills of assistant principals and current teachers and strategically engaging assistant principals and teacher leaders in the instructional work of the district in order to equip them with hands-on experience they can ultimately apply later in their careers.

And finally, in addition to building a pipeline of future school leaders, **districts should expand their efforts to prepare the next generation of *district* leaders.** In particular, as the purpose and competencies of principal supervisors become more clearly defined and codified, districts should start identifying and cultivating staff equipped to eventually take on these critical management roles.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize these recommendations.

## Table 3. Summary of recommendations for building more effective principal supervisory systems

| |
|---|
| 1. Define and clearly communicate throughout the organization the role and required competencies of principal supervisors. |
| 2. Narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control |
| 3. Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the needs of schools. |
| 4. Provide principal supervisors with the professional development and training they need to assume new instructional leadership roles. |
| 5. Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure clear lines of communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and central office staff. |
| 6. Provide early and sustained support to new principals in the form of coaches. |
| 7. Hold principals—and principal supervisors—accountable for the progress of their schools, and ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance. |
| 8. Provide clear, timely, and actionable evaluation data to principals. |
| 9. Commit district resources and engage external partners in the process of developing future school and district leaders. |

## Table 4. Recommendations by topic area

| | |
|---|---|
| **Prescribed role of principal supervisors** | Clearly define the role of principal supervisors. |
| | Develop a set of core competencies for principal supervisors based on their prescribed role and the district's strategic priorities. |
| | Communicate the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors to staff throughout the district. |
| **Selection and deployment of principal supervisors** | Select principal supervisors who are effective leaders with a proven track record of improving student and school outcomes. |
| | Align the selection and hiring process with the set of desired competencies identified for principal supervisors. |
| | Narrow the responsibilities and number of schools under each supervisor's purview so that they can devote more time to providing principals with individualized support and oversight. |
| | Strategically match principal supervisors with principals, taking into account their background expertise and the specific needs of a school. |
| **Staffing, preparation, and professional development of principal supervisors** | Provide principal supervisors with an appropriate level of staffing and resources given their intended function. |
| | Design comprehensive, ongoing professional development programs targeted to the needs and desired competencies of principal supervisors. |
| | Provide professional learning opportunities for principal supervisors that promote a deep understanding of the instructional shifts required by the common core standards. Prepare principal supervisors to lead the process of change in the schools they oversee. |
| | Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and central office staff. |

*(Table 4. continued)*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Principal and principal supervisor evaluation** | Hold principals—and principal supervisors—accountable for the progress of their schools. |
| | Design and implement principal evaluation systems that support continuous improvement by providing timely, actionable data and establishing regular meetings between principals and their supervisors to discuss progress. |
| | Ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance. |
| | Incorporate teacher retention measures into the evaluations of principals. |
| **Principal preparation and development** | Provide early and sustained support to new principals in the form of coaches. |
| | Ensure that both home-grown and external principal preparation programs are closely aligned to district needs and priorities. |
| | Engage principal supervisors in the process of preparing and hiring school leaders. |
| | Provide internship and residency opportunities to prepare future principals for leadership in high-need, urban settings. |
| | Identify and support future school and district leaders early in their career. |

# DISCUSSION

## SUMMING IT UP

As the role of school principal has been transformed from one of site management to one of instructional leadership, districts have sought to match these changes with principal preparation, recruitment, support, and evaluation systems capable of strengthening school-based leadership and student achievement. In many school districts, this has meant a more robust instructional leadership role for principal *supervisors* as well. Staff in these new supervisor roles must now be equipped to identify, assess, and advance effective instruction. And in the context of the Common Core State Standards, they must be ready to lead broad-based instructional change and reform.

Through our survey and site visits to six large school districts, the Council of the Great City Schools observed principal supervisory structures and practices that appeared to place districts in a better position to support such instructional leadership and connect district reforms to schools and classrooms. Our study findings suggest, for instance, that districts should clearly establish and communicate the role and required competencies of principal supervisors. Principal supervisors should then be selected for, evaluated on, and equipped with the instructional expertise necessary to serve in these roles. These roles need not look the same from district to district, but they should reflect an individual district's goals and strategy for improving student achievement.

In addition, if principal supervisors are to provide personalized, hands-on support, districts should work to (1) narrow principal supervisors' spans of control, and (2) limit the competing responsibilities that shift a principal supervisors' attention away from their work in schools. Districts should strategically deploy these supervisors, ensuring that they are well matched to schools and equipped to support the individual needs of all of the principals they oversee. Moreover, principal supervisors should be just one part of an integrated talent development strategy, one that includes strong instructional preparation of principals and access to principal coaches in the first years of a principal's tenure.

Many of these findings reflect the need for consistency and alignment. For example, we observed accountability systems that clearly articulated progress-based performance measures for principal supervisors that were aligned with both school performance measures and broader systemwide goals. We did not see this everywhere, but this practice appears to add direction and coherence to the instructional work of supervisors.

Another apparent strength in some of the districts we visited was the ability of district leadership to pair their expectations of collaboration among staff with procedures or mechanisms that made such cooperation routine. Some districts rely on the personal relationships that grow between central office departments and staff, but backing up these informal networks with specific processes and structures for collaboration is more likely to ensure strong, sustained communication in pursuit of higher achievement.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

Stepping back from these cross-district comparisons, the critical question at this juncture becomes whether these differences in principal supervisory structures and practices matter when it comes to improving student achievement. Can principal supervisors make a difference?

Unfortunately, there are currently no data showing a direct link between student attainment and any one principal supervisory model or approach. In fact, previous Council research on why some large urban school systems improve faster academically than others suggests that, despite their high profile, management and organizational structures may not be the determining factors in improving district performance. Instead, *it is how well these structures support and enhance instructional quality* that determines their impact on student achievement.

So when we identify instruction-focused professional development or academic measures of progress for principal supervisors as "strong" features of district supervisory systems, we are hypothesizing that these are the features that are likely to have the greatest impact on a principal supervisor's capacity to drive instructional quality at the school level and, ultimately, to move the needle on student achievement.

For example, we observed numerous mechanisms for providing professional development to principal supervisors and principals. The professional development efforts that appeared to provide the most meaningful support were those that were (1) focused on the *instructional* needs and goals of supervisors and principals, (2) sustained over time, (3) differentiated according to the skills and experience of personnel and the needs of the schools under their aegis, and (4) evaluated on how they affected student performance. These practices appeared more likely to help supervisors grow as instructional leaders and for students to benefit academically. Not only are such approaches to professional development aligned to district expectations of principals and principal supervisors, but they also assist districts in building a steady pipeline of future leaders.

At the same time, even promising practices may still be irrelevant in terms of their overall impact if they aren't part of an interwoven set of strategies. Again, our past research and hands-on work with large urban districts point to a number of features and strategies that high-performing, fast-improving districts share. These districts generally had strong and sustained leadership teams that united district staff behind a shared vision for improved student achievement. They set clear, systemwide goals and created a culture of accountability for meeting these goals. They developed uniform frameworks for what high-quality teaching and learning should look like, and they supported such instruction with targeted professional development and careful oversight of implementation. And faster-improving districts used data aggressively to monitor progress and help inform instructional practices in every classroom.

Each factor was critical, but these studies ultimately conclude that it is unlikely that any one of these steps alone could have resulted in higher student achievement. Rather, it was the combined force of these reforms and their mutually reinforcing nature that appeared to make the biggest difference in improving student performance.

We suspect the same holds true for principal support and supervisory systems. In order to better connect the impact of these structures to schools and classrooms, districts need to build systems wherein the processes for selecting, deploying, supporting, and evaluating principal supervisors each work in tandem to strengthen the role of these critical staff members in schools and in the district.

## NEXT STEPS

In addition to ensuring that the various features of principal supervisory structures are internally consistent and integrated in a way that supports school-based instructional leadership, districts should think carefully about how the work of principal supervisors is connected to the district's major reform initiatives and overall vision for change.

In the context of the Common Core State Standards, for example, principal supervisors provide a critical link between central office leadership and resources and building-level personnel. Yet what could be an invaluable lever in common core implementation efforts is, in some districts, overlooked or squandered amidst competing priorities and constraints of time or skill. Repeatedly, conversations with district- and school-level staff revealed systems that were unprepared to manage the transition to the common core. In our opinion, this unpreparedness was driven by critical gaps—principals who did not know where to find the instructional resources they needed to raise standards at their school site, supervisors who lacked a deep understanding of the instructional shifts called for by the common core, and central office curriculum staff unable to determine the impact—if any—that district instructional policies and resources were having on

school-level implementation efforts—and how they should adjust their work to better meet these needs. Regardless of a district's particular approach to principal support and evaluation structures, this is precisely the "connector" role principal supervisors could —and arguably should—fill to support districtwide implementation of the new standards.

Additionally, there should be a greater connection between the work of principal supervisors and district human-capital and talent-management strategies. Although retaining effective teachers and leaders is arguably a critical and common objective of district teacher quality initiatives, we did not see much evidence that the work of principal supervisors or the evaluation of either supervisors or principals included their ability to identify and retain a district's best talent. Nor did we see much indication of how the responsibilities of supervisors fit together with reforms being pursued in human resource departments and other operations.

Moreover, large school districts throughout the country are thinking about how to restructure and redesign their central offices and deploy financial and human resources in ways that better serve and enhance their broader student academic goals. These efforts are prompted by the need to modernize the organizational effectiveness of these bureaucracies, streamline personnel reporting, adjust overall staffing levels, and rethink the deployment of staff—such as principal supervisors—to better serve the needs of students.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, the recommendations in this report reflect the need for internal consistency, focus, and coherence in how districts define and support the work of principal supervisors. Districts should endeavor to align their strategic goals for supporting and evaluating principals with the structure and management of their supervisory and support systems. If principal supervisors are expected to function as instructional leaders and to provide individualized, hands-on instructional support to principals —as they are in many districts—their background skills, workload, spans of control, and the processes by which they are selected, trained, and evaluated should reflect this core function.

While structure and approach may vary among districts, principal supervisory systems should be both internally consistent and integrated into the full portfolio of district reform efforts. In our study of principal supervisors we have come to believe that, as the link between the central office and schools, staff members in these positions have the potential to significantly impact leadership and instructional improvement at the school level. Districts should now work to ensure that such structures are best positioned to reinforce and enhance systemwide strategic goals and, ultimately, student achievement.

# APPENDIX A. RESULTS OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR SURVEY

## CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

- The number of principal supervisors in the responding urban school districts ranged from a low of two in districts like Birmingham, Dayton, and Richmond to a high of 41 in New York City. Responding districts had an average of eight principal supervisors and a median of five (Table 1).

- The length of time that principal supervisors had been in their positions in the responding districts ranged from a high of 11 years in Clark County to a low of one year. The average tenure was three years and the median was two. The results suggest that this position has been adapted or reinvented recently in many districts, or that turnover in the positions has been extensive (Table 2).

- The formal titles of principal supervisors varied considerably, but words like director, superintendent, and officer were often contained in the titles. Words like leadership, reform, and assistant were less frequently seen (Table 3).

- Prior to their positions as principal supervisors, 97 percent of respondents had at least two years of experience as a principal, 42 percent had at least two years of experience as a principal coach or mentor, and 95 percent had at least two years of experience as a teacher. Few had experience as either a human resource administrator, operations administrator, or guidance counselor (Table 4).

- The average number of principals overseen by each principal supervisor was 24, with a median of 18. The numbers ranged from three to 100 (Table 5).

- On average, principal supervisors have staffs of approximately two clerical personnel, one principal coach/mentor, and one special education specialist (Table 6).

- The top five tasks that principal supervisors reported being engaged in 2012 were (1) visiting schools, (2) convening principals to discuss instructional issues, (3) evaluating principals, (4) coaching principals, and (5) conducting professional development with principals. All of these tasks except for conducting professional development have increased over the last two years. Respondents indicated that work with assistant principals did not typically fall in their top five tasks, and tasks related to community complaints and operational issues had declined over the last two years (Table 7).

- To support principals directly, principal supervisors reported being engaged in the following top five activities in 2012: (1) conversing with principals about student performance data, (2) visiting classrooms with principals, (3) conversing with principals about their performance,( 4) conversing with principals about teacher performance, and (5) assisting principals in responding to issues raised by parents or community. All of these activities except spending time responding to parent/community issues have increased or stayed the same over the last two years. Other tasks that increased included facilitating professional development on teaching and learning and engaging in teacher evaluation observations with principals. Tasks that showed declines generally involved helping principals with operational issues (Table 8).

- Additional duties that principal supervisors engaged in included district administrative and compliance responsibilities. These duties increased over the last two years, meaning that supervisors are taking on more administrative responsibilities at the same time that they are being pressed to be instructional leaders (Table 9).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

- Over 60 percent of principal supervisors reported that they received professional development in the following areas to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement (Table 10):

  o  Reviewing school (student) performance data

  o  Observing classrooms, with a focus on student learning and student work

  o  Understanding the shift in reading and writing expectations and instruction due to new standards

  o  Using student performance data to improve classroom instruction

  o  Conducting principal evaluations

  o  Understanding the shift in mathematics expectations and instruction due to new standards

- Principal supervisors reported receiving less professional development in helping principals work collaboratively with parents, conducting faculty meetings, and handling operational issues than in the areas listed above. Nine percent of principal supervisors report receiving no professional development in helping principals in the prior year (Table 10).

- Approximately 18 percent of principal supervisors reported needing more time for coaching principals, 15 percent reported needing fewer meetings and more time to visit schools, 14 percent reported needing more professional development on leadership and better time management, and 10 percent reported needing more support with the Common Core State Standards in order to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement (Table 11).

- Approximately 95 percent of principal supervisors reported receiving professional development from their respective districts. Some 50 percent reported receiving professional development from professional organizations, 36 percent received professional development from contractors or publishers, and 26 percent reported receiving professional development from their states or a state regional service center (Table 12).

- Principal supervisors who reported receiving professional development on observing classrooms with a focus on student work and student learning were more likely to engage in tasks involving visiting schools, coaching principals, convening principals to discuss instructional issues, and evaluating principals (Table 13).

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

- Principal supervisors reported having principal evaluation systems in place in their districts for periods ranging from one year to 31 years, with an average of seven years (Table 14). Some 13 districts reported that their principal evaluation systems had only been in place for a single year, a fact that suggests that either the evaluation systems are new for many districts or that they were recently revised to reflect changes in district expectations for the role.

- Principal supervisors reported having an evaluation system in place for assistant principals for periods ranging from one to 31 years, with an average of eight years. The similarity in the figures for principals and assistant principals suggests that the evaluation systems for principals and assistant principals were often developed simultaneously (Table 15).

- Approximately 96 percent of principal supervisors said that the purpose of their district's principal-evaluation system was to improve principal effectiveness; 79 percent said that the purpose was to identify items for ongoing principal professional growth for individual principals; 74 percent said the purpose was to make decisions about principal retention; and 65 percent indicated that the purpose was to identify items for ongoing professional growth for all principals. Very few reported that the purpose of the principal evaluation systems was to make decisions about principal pay, merit pay, or promotions (Table 16).

- Sixty-one percent of responding principal supervisors reported that their district's principal-evaluation system was created by their own school district. Some 22 percent indicated that they were required to use their state's system and 10 percent reported that their districts modified another entity's evaluation system or purchased it from a developer (Table 17).

- Ten responding districts (not principal supervisors) reported that their principal evaluation systems were based solely on their state's standards; three districts said they originated solely from ISLCC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) standards; and one district reported that its system was developed internally. Principal supervisors from 26 districts cited multiple sources. It is highly likely that respondents did not know the origin of their principal evaluation systems or did not know which state standards were also based on ISLCC. In fact, 18 of the 26 districts that indicated that their standards came from multiple sources cited ISLCC in addition to other standards (Table 18).

- More than 80 percent of principal supervisors rated the following components of their principal evaluation systems as being somewhat effective, effective, or very effective: setting annual principal goals, gauging student performance on state assessments, and having written instruments completed by the principal supervisor. Some 12 percent indicated that having feedback from more than one principal supervisor was not very effective. And components related to teacher retention were most often not included in principal evaluation systems, a finding that warrants additional investigation because of the need to retain top talent (Table 19).

- At least 50 percent of principal supervisors strongly agreed with statements that principals were involved in creating their evaluation systems and that there was a mechanism for principals to provide feedback annually to district leaders. They were least likely to report that their principal evaluation systems were piloted in a few schools before being rolled out districtwide or that there were rewards or consequences for performance in the evaluation system (Table 20).

- Approximately 35 percent of principal supervisors reported that student assessment results accounted for between 31 and 50 percent of a principal's evaluation, and 16 percent stated that principal evaluation of teachers accounted for between 31 and 50 percent of a principal's evaluation. Interestingly, 29 percent reported that principal evaluations of teachers accounted for less than 20 percent of principal evaluations, suggesting a mismatch between the evaluation of principals and the evaluation of teachers. In addition, less than a quarter of principal supervisors (23 percent) reported

that student assessment data accounted for more than half of principal evaluations. The results also indicate that community and parent engagement counted for less than 30 percent of principal evaluations in a substantial number of cases (Table 21).

- Some 93 percent of principal supervisors reported that their principals received both written and oral feedback. Five percent or less reported only one mode of feedback (Table 22).

- Fifty-eight percent of principal supervisors graded their principal evaluation systems as excellent or good (A or B); 31 percent graded them as average (C); and 11 percent graded them as poor (D) or very poor (F) (Table 23).

- More than 50 percent of principal supervisors who graded their principal evaluation system as an A or B also rated effective such components as having written instruments completed by supervisors, self-assessments completed by principals, observations of principal interactions with staff, and annual goals for principals (Table 24).

- Twenty-three percent of principal supervisors indicated that principals needed additional supports in leadership development (e.g., teacher development, evaluation strategies, and progress monitoring) in order to be more effective and improve student achievement (Table 25).

Table 1. Number of principal supervisors in districts, n=135

| Descriptive statistics | Number |
| --- | --- |
| Minimum | 2 |
| Maximum | 41 |
| Average | 8 |
| Median | 5 |
| Mode | 4 |

Table 2. Number of years in current position as principal supervisor, n=133

| Descriptive statistics | Number |
|---|---|
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 11 |
| Average | 3 |
| Median | 2 |
| Mode | 1 |

Table 3. Formal titles of principal supervisors, n=135

| Title | Percent |
|---|---|
| Executive/Area Director | 42 |
| Associate/Area/Academic/Assistant Superintendent | 23 |
| Chief Officer | 20 |
| Instructional Superintendent | 8 |
| Regional Administrator | 3 |
| Coach | 2 |
| Lead Principal | 2 |

Table 4. Prior positions of principal supervisors, n=135

| Title | Not applicable | 1 year or less | 2-4 years | 5 years and over |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Principal | 2 | 0 | 16 | 81 |
| Principal Coach/Mentor | 49 | 10 | 21 | 21 |
| Guidance counselor | 92 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Teacher | 4 | 0 | 19 | 76 |
| Central office instructional administrator | 52 | 12 | 16 | 21 |
| Human resource administrator | 96 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| School operations administrator | 84 | 3 | 4 | 9 |

Table 5. Number of principals reporting to principal supervisors, n=135

| Descriptive statistics | Number |
|---|---|
| Minimum | 3 |
| Maximum | 100 |
| Average | 24 |
| Median | 18 |
| Mode | 15 |

Table 6. Average number of principal supervisor support staff, n=134

| Average number of support staff | |
|---|---|
| Principal coaches/mentors | 1.28 |
| Clerical | 1.92 |
| Reading/ELA support | .40 |
| Mathematics support | .31 |
| Science support | .20 |
| Operational support | .57 |
| Gifted education support | .04 |
| Special education specialist | 1.06 |
| English language learners specialist | .23 |

**Table 7. Percentage of respondents rating specified tasks as among the top five for principal supervisors, n=85**

| Tasks | Top 5 tasks for school year ending June 2012 | Top 5 tasks for the past 2 years |
|---|---|---|
| Visit schools | 93 | 88 |
| Convene principals to discuss instructional issues | 81 | 74 |
| Evaluate principals | 74 | 71 |
| Coach principals | 73 | 62 |
| Conduct professional development opportunities with principals | 48 | 49 |
| Provide technical assistance to principals | 41 | 40 |
| Address community complaints | 36 | 45 |
| Address operational issues | 32 | 36 |
| Represent district at community events | 13 | 9 |
| Convene assistant principals to discuss instructional issues | 4 | 5 |
| Coach assistant principals | 2 | 2 |
| Provide technical assistance to assistant principals | 2 | 5 |
| Conduct professional development opportunities with assistant principals | 2 | 6 |
| Evaluate assistant principals | 0 | 2 |

Table 8. Percentage of respondents rating specified tasks *to support principals* as among the top five for principal supervisors, n=85

| Tasks | Top 5 tasks for school year ending June 2012 | Top 5 tasks for the past 2 years |
|---|---|---|
| Converse with the principals about school (student) performance data | 89 | 85 |
| Visit classrooms with principals | 78 | 74 |
| Converse with the principals about their performance | 76 | 76 |
| Converse with the principals about teacher performance | 75 | 67 |
| Assist principals in responding to issues raised by parents or community | 46 | 53 |
| Observe principals participating in or facilitating professional development on teaching and learning with staff | 33 | 29 |
| Assist principals in planning operational issues such as budgeting, facilities management and maintenance | 31 | 35 |
| Observe principals conducting faculty meetings and common planning time sessions | 27 | 25 |
| Engage in teacher evaluation observations with the principal | 18 | 11 |
| Assist principals in school-based budgeting and hiring | 16 | 18 |
| Assist principals in how to engage more parents in school related activities | 8 | 11 |
| Assist principals in scheduling or developing the school calendar | 5 | 5 |

Table 9. Other designated tasks of principal supervisors in 2012 and over the past two years, n=85

| Tasks | Current responsibility | Responsibility 2 years ago |
|---|---|---|
| Address district administrative issues | 80 | 76 |
| Address district compliance issues | 62 | 60 |
| I do not have any additional responsibilities | 16 | 14 |
| Responsible for district's special education program | 1 | 1 |
| Serve as district testing coordinator | 0 | 1 |
| Responsible for district's gifted and talented program | 0 | 2 |

Table 10. Percentage of principal supervisors engaging in professional development activities to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement, n=130

| Professional development engaged in | Percent |
|---|---|
| Reviewing school (student) performance data | 79 |
| Observing classrooms with a focus on student learning and student work | 71 |
| Understanding the shift in reading and writing expectations and instruction due to new standards | 69 |
| Using student performance data to improve classroom instruction | 67 |
| Conducting principal evaluations | 65 |
| Understanding the shift in mathematics expectations and instruction due to new standards | 64 |
| Conducting teacher evaluations | 41 |
| Conducting meetings focused on teaching and learning with their teachers | 39 |
| Facilitating professional development with staff | 35 |
| Planning operational issues such as budgeting and facilities management | 28 |
| Conducting faculty meetings, common planning time sessions, etc. | 21 |
| Working collaboratively with parents | 18 |
| Other | 14 |
| I did not receive any professional development related to supporting principals last year | 9 |

**Table 11. Types of additional support principal supervisors report they need to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement, n = 117**

| Additional support needed for principal supervisors | Percent |
|---|---|
| More coaching time and strategies for providing support to principals | 18 |
| Fewer meetings/more time (to work with principals, visit schools, plan) | 15 |
| Professional development (i.e. leadership training, clarity on role, time management) | 14 |
| Support with Common Core State Standards | 10 |
| Other | 7 |
| Training on effective teaching strategies and curriculum development | 6 |
| Evaluation tools and observation strategies | 6 |
| Additional instruction personnel and specialist | 5 |
| Data on progress | 4 |
| Resources and funds | 3 |
| No additional training needed; satisfied with currently training | 3 |
| Collaboration with other districts and other departments | 3 |
| Technology | 2 |
| Collaboration and discussion with colleagues to share effective strategies | 2 |
| Additional training on students with special needs (i.e. ELL, learning disabilities, behavioral problems) | 2 |

Table 12. Sources of professional development for principal supervisors, n=129

| Source | Percent |
|---|---|
| State or State's regional service center | 26 |
| District | 95 |
| Professional organizations | 50 |
| Contractors or publishers | 36 |
| Other | 9 |

Table 13. Percentage of principal supervisors who engaged in
specified tasks by the type of professional development they received, n=108

| Tasks | Type of professional development received | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Conducting meetings focused on teaching and learning with their teachers | Observing classrooms with a focus on student learning and student work | Conducting teacher evaluations | Conducting principal evaluations |
| Visit Schools | 42 | 79 | 42 | 74 |
| Evaluate Principals | 35 | 62 | 33 | 62 |
| Evaluate assistant principals | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Coach principals | 33 | 64 | 39 | 56 |
| Coach assistant principals | 6 | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| Provide technical assistance to principals | 20 | 36 | 19 | 33 |
| Provide technical assistance to assistant principals | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Convene principals to discuss instructional issues | 34 | 64 | 33 | 60 |

*(Table 13. continued)*

| Tasks | Type of professional development received | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Conducting meetings focused on teaching and learning with their teachers | Observing classrooms with a focus on student learning and student work | Conducting teacher evaluations | Conducting principal evaluations |
| Convene assistant principals to discuss instructional issues | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Address community complaints | 18 | 31 | 19 | 32 |
| Address operational issues | 11 | 27 | 13 | 25 |
| Represent district at community events | 5 | 11 | 6 | 10 |
| Conduct professional development opportunities with principals | 19 | 35 | 20 | 27 |
| Conduct professional development opportunities with assistant principals | 6 | 6 | 4 | 7 |

Table 14. Average number of years principal evaluation system has been in place, n=120

| Descriptive statistics | Number |
| --- | --- |
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 31 |
| Average | 7 |
| Median | 5 |
| Mode | 1 |

Table 15. Average number of years assistant principal evaluation system has been in place, n=120

| Descriptive statistics | Number |
| --- | --- |
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 31 |
| Average | 8 |
| Median | 5 |
| Mode | 1 |

Table 16. Principal supervisor perceptions of the
purpose of their district's principal evaluation system, n=128

| Purpose | Percent |
|---|---|
| Improve principal effectiveness | 96 |
| Identify items for ongoing professional growth for an individual principal | 79 |
| Make decisions about retention of principals | 74 |
| Identify items for ongoing professional growth for all principals | 65 |
| Place principals on probation | 40 |
| Make decisions about principal promotions | 24 |
| Make decisions about merit pay for principals | 11 |
| Make decisions about principal's annual pay rate | 3 |
| Other | 5 |

Table 17. Percentage of principal supervisors indicating
the origins of their principal evaluation systems, n=137

| Origin of principal evaluation system | Percent |
|---|---|
| Created by school district | 61 |
| We are mandated to use our state's system to evaluate principals | 22 |
| Modified version of another system | 7 |
| Purchased from a developer | 3 |
| Other | 7 |

Table 18. Number of districts indicating the origins of the standards used as the basis
of their principal evaluation system, n-41

| (ISLLC) | Their state's standards | Professional association | Developed internally | Don't know | Multiple responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 26 |

Table 19. Principal supervisor perceptions of the effectiveness of specific components of principal evaluation system, n=127

| Component | Not included | Very effective to effective | Somewhat effective | Not very effective to not effective at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Written instrument completed by supervisor | 2 | 68 | 23 | 8 |
| Self-assessment completed by principal | 19 | 52 | 21 | 8 |
| Observations of principal interactions with staff | 17 | 61 | 17 | 6 |
| Principal's annual goals | 6 | 72 | 17 | 6 |
| Portfolio of principal's work/accomplishments throughout the year | 32 | 49 | 13 | 6 |
| Survey completed by school staff/parents/community | 25 | 46 | 24 | 5 |
| Student performance on state assessments —math, ELA, science, social studies | 10 | 72 | 14 | 4 |
| Student performance on district assessments —math, ELA, science, social studies | 20 | 57 | 17 | 6 |
| Closing achievement gaps | 14 | 59 | 17 | 10 |
| Student attendance | 17 | 55 | 23 | 5 |
| Improving student achievement of English language learners | 19 | 54 | 20 | 7 |
| Teacher effectiveness data–how many students meet a certain proficiency level or go from one level to the next | 20 | 59 | 15 | 6 |
| Teacher retention data | 29 | 41 | 21 | 9 |
| Feedback from more than one principal supervisor | 48 | 28 | 13 | 12 |

Table 20. Percentage of principal supervisors indicating agreement with statements about specific components of their principal evaluation system, n=127

| Statement | Strongly agree to agree | Somewhat agree to somewhat disagree | Disagree to strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principals were involved in creating our evaluation system. | 50 | 30 | 20 |
| There is a mechanism in place for principals to annually provide feedback to district leaders. | 53 | 29 | 18 |
| Teachers had the opportunity to critique this system before it became operationalized. | 25 | 34 | 41 |
| Our evaluation system was piloted first in a few schools. | 32 | 20 | 47 |
| There are rewards and/or consequences for performance on the evaluation. | 37 | 41 | 22 |

Table 21. Percentage of principal supervisors indicating the weight given to specific components of their principal evaluation systems, n=127

| Component | Less than 20% | Less than 30% | 31-50% | Greater than 51% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student assessment data | 16 | 26 | 35 | 23 |
| Principal evaluation of teachers | 29 | 49 | 16 | 6 |
| Parental engagement | 18 | 78 | 4 | 0 |
| Community engagement | 18 | 78 | 3 | 1 |

Table 22. Percentage of principal supervisors providing specific
types of feedback to their principals as a result of the evaluation process, n=126

| Type of feedback | Percent |
|---|---|
| Written feedback | 5 |
| Oral feedback | 2 |
| Written and oral feedback | 93 |

Table 23. Percentage of principal supervisors giving their
principal evaluation system specified grades for quality, n=125

| Grade | Percent |
|---|---|
| A (Excellent) | 16 |
| B (Good) | 42 |
| C (Average) | 31 |
| D (Poor) | 9 |
| F (Very Poor) | 2 |

Table 24. Percentage of principal supervisors grading their principal evaluation system A or B by their perceived effectiveness of specific program components, n=72

| Principal evaluation components | Not included | Very effective | Effective | Somewhat effective | Not very effective | Not effective at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Written instrument completed by supervisor | 3 | 29 | 61 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Self-assessment completed by principal | 11 | 14 | 56 | 15 | 3 | 1 |
| Observations of principal interactions with staff | 8 | 25 | 54 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| Principal's annual goals | 1 | 35 | 53 | 8 | 3 | 0 |
| Portfolio of principal's work/ accomplishments throughout the year | 29 | 17 | 42 | 6 | 7 | 0 |
| Survey completed by school staff/parents/ community | 15 | 26 | 35 | 21 | 3 | 0 |
| Student performance on state assessments—math, ELA, science, social studies | 10 | 49 | 40 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Student performance on district assessments— math, ELA, science, social studies | 19 | 36 | 33 | 7 | 4 | 0 |

*(Table 24. continued)*

| Principal Evaluation Components | Not included | Very effective | Effective | Somewhat effective | Not very effective | Not effective at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Closing achievement gaps | 10 | 36 | 39 | 11 | 3 | 1 |
| Student attendance | 14 | 26 | 40 | 17 | 1 | 1 |
| Improving student achievement of English language learners | 14 | 28 | 43 | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher effectiveness data—how many students meet a certain proficiency level or go from one level to the next | 13 | 33 | 44 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Teacher retention data | 21 | 21 | 36 | 11 | 7 | 4 |

**Table 25. Percentage of principal supervisors indicating the type of additional support principals need to improve their effectiveness and student achievement, n=87**

| Additional support for principals | Percent of respondents |
|---|---|
| Leadership development (teacher development, evaluation strategies, progress monitoring) | 23 |
| Additional mentorship and coaching | 16 |
| More professional development or professional development that is focused and relevant to their needs | 11 |
| Curriculum development, instructional strategies, and assessments | 9 |
| Fewer meetings/more time to plan and make changes in schools | 8 |
| Other | 7 |
| Less responsibilities and additional staff (i.e.,12 month assistant principals, instructional specialist, operations staff) | 6 |
| More data and information on data management | 4 |
| Clarity on expectations and the objectives for students | 3 |
| Collaboration (with districts or other principals) | 3 |
| Not sure | 3 |
| Support with common core | 2 |
| Resources | 2 |
| None | 2 |

# APPENDIX B. DISTRICTS REPRESENTED IN PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR SURVEY

Surveys were received from the following districts:

1. Anchorage School District
2. Atlanta Public Schools
3. Austin Independent School District
4. Baltimore City Public Schools
5. Birmingham City Schools
6. Boston Public Schools
7. Broward County Public Schools
8. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Public Schools
9. Chicago Public Schools
10. Cincinnati Public Schools
11. Clark County School District
12. Cleveland Metropolitan School District
13. Columbus City Schools
14. Dayton Public Schools
15. Denver Public Schools
16. Des Moines Independent Community School District
17. District of Columbia Public Schools
18. Duval County Public Schools
19. Gwinnett County Public Schools
20. Hillsborough County Public Schools
21. Houston Independent School District
22. Kansas City Public Schools
23. Little Rock School District
24. Long Beach Unified School District
25. Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
26. Miami-Dade County Public Schools
27. Milwaukee Public Schools
28. Minneapolis Public Schools
29. New York City Department of Education
30. Norfolk Public Schools
31. Oakland Unified School District
32. Omaha Public Schools
33. Orange County Public Schools
34. The School District of Palm Beach County
35. Portland Public Schools
36. Prince George's County Public Schools
37. Providence Public School District
38. Richmond Public Schools
39. San Diego Unified School District
40. Santa Ana Unified School District
41. St. Paul Public Schools

# APPENDIX C. SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS

Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools

Amanda Corcoran, Special Projects Manager, Council of the Great City Schools

Robin Hall, Director of English Language Arts, Council of the Great City Schools

Ricki Price-Baugh, Director of Academic Achievement, Council of the Great City Schools

Candace Simon, Research Manager, Council of the Great City Schools

Denise Walston, Director of Mathematics, Council of the Great City Schools