



The Role of the Leadership Performance System in Accelerating Student Achievement

THE ROLE OF THE LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE SYSTEM ■

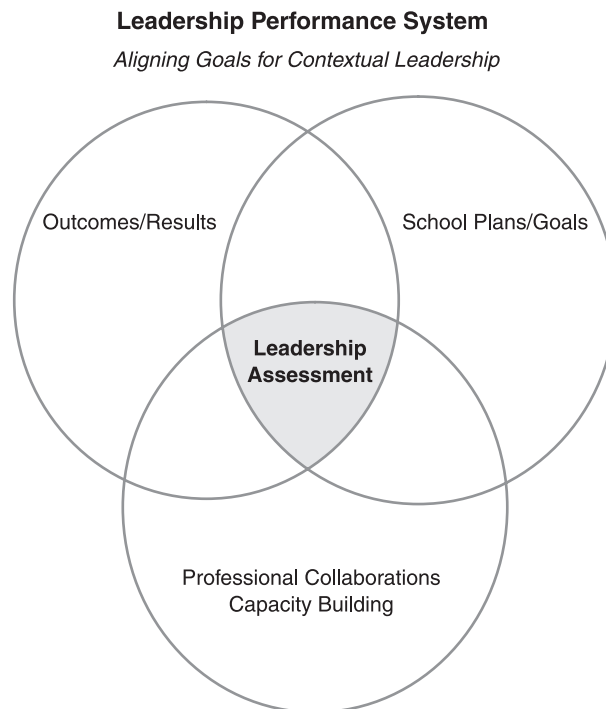
The leadership performance system (LPS) helps sustain personal and professional improvement by offering a system that aligns leadership performance and learning in the context of their school system. It provides school leaders with a contextual leadership assessment process (Figure 1.1). In a coherent and systematic way, it helps to compile and record goals, action plans, and data with deliberate attention to professional performance and evidence of effectiveness. As the means of organizing and streamlining evaluation, the LPS helps school leaders focus their goals for student learning, determine tools for evaluating student data, and establish professional priorities. Most important of all the LPS provides a structure and process to build capacity to support and sustain a leadership professional learning community.

Over the years I have depended on my own professional learning communities for reflection, collaboration, and filling in the blind spot in my

thinking. Learning communities give me perspectives I have not yet accessed and pose challenging questions as to why, what, and how I am growing with my work. Most important, learning communities lead me to resources for expanding, deepening, and restructuring my understandings of the work of educators and the purpose of education in the Information Age. Without the combination of experiences from my various learning communities, I would never have matured in my understandings with the combination of conviction, confidence, and verve for my work. This combination of evolving knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes regarding work is developed and enhanced through the reflective collaborations with colleagues.

Creating the leadership portfolio is not just another activity; rather, it is an opportunity to advance goals, develop action plans, and provide evidence and outcomes in the context of a professional learning community.

Figure 1.1 The LPS



Leadership Performance

For the past several years, national organizations, state departments of education, and local school leadership organizations have developed standards meant to align educational leaders with our changing and challenging times. Many states have adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards to define the extensive scope of work and establish expectations for local administrators' practices. These standards provide a common language across state and regional differences, facilitating joint projects and sharing of effective strategies and resources.

The ISLLC standards place emphasis on leadership for student learning, which is central to school improvement and the current expectations of

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Those standards articulate what administrators should know, believe, and be able to do to improve schools, increase student learning, and attend to the accountability requirements for student achievement. (See Appendix E for a complete list of the ISLLC standards.)

In 1994 and 1995, representatives from states and professional associations in partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration wrote ISLLC's "Standards for School Leaders." The standards development was supported by grants from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Danforth Foundation. They were published by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 1996 and have been adopted or used by many states in the development of their own administrator standards and licensing policies (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

ISLLC Standards and LPS in Alignment

ISLLC STANDARD	LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE SYSTEM
<p>Standard 1 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.</p>	<p>PURPOSE Leadership reflection of values, beliefs, and commitment—<i>Credo</i></p> <p>FOCUS Priorities for action and for professional learning Employ systems planning model Use communication conventions</p>
<p>Standard 2 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</p>	<p>PURPOSE Alignment of vision, mission, and goals</p> <p>PROCESS/STRUCTURES Culture assessments, for reform readiness Review and establish professional learning community Relationships—roles and responsibilities Professional development for job-embedded learning Establish performance and professional learning goals</p>
<p>Standard 3 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, an effective learning environment.</p>	<p>FOCUS/STRUCTURES Alignment of goals and performance standards, identification of professional learning structure for completing work such as board, district leadership, leadership roundtable</p> <p>PROCESS Monitoring progress and making adaptations in planning as indicated</p> <p>OUTCOMES Determine action priorities Establish decision-making processes and communication conventions Practices to promote a theory of action</p>

Figure 1.2 Continued

ISLLC STANDARD	LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE SYSTEM
<p>Standard 4 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success for all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests, and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</p>	<p>PROCESS Establish committees, focus groups, and parent advisories, identification of professional learning structure for completing the work such as school site council, parent groups, business/ leadership roundtable Use meeting conventions and sustain active communications</p> <p>OUTCOMES Outreach to stakeholders, community, and board Engagement in action priorities</p>
<p>Standard 5 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</p>	<p>PURPOSE Clear purpose of the role of educational leadership in their community Commitment to honor shared and diverse values of the school community and the community at large</p>
	<p>PROCESS Employ professional efficacy and ethical frameworks to lead by example with exemplar ethical behaviors for the educational community</p>
<p>Standard 6 A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success for all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</p>	<p>PURPOSE Communicate vision and mission</p>
	<p>PROCESS/STRUCTURES Sustain outreach structures for convening the stakeholder group/identification of professional learning structure for completing the work—that is, board, district leadership, local government/leadership roundtable Establish a sustainable communication process with stakeholders</p> <p>OUTCOMES Professional network and learning community System planning procedures Report results and plan for continuous improvement Integrate new learning and feedback into practice</p>

Most evaluations of school administrators are based on six primary performance areas, aligned with ISLLC's standards and tied to accelerating student learning:

- Articulate and facilitate a shared vision that represents community needs and aligns with goals for the school's student performance outcomes.
- Nurture a collaborative school culture and cohesive instructional program.
- Manage the organization and operations that sustain an efficient, safe, and effective environment.
- Mobilize collaborations among school, community, and business partners to optimize resources and expertise.
- Model professional ethics and highlight learning and commitment.
- Understand political, economic, and legal environments and respond in a professional manner that is in the interest of the local educational system.

(For background on the ISLLC standards, go to the CCSSO Web site: <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf>.)

Of course, these six performance areas overlap to form an interdependent system. One common thread is professional development, which enhances all six performance areas. Improvement in one area generally leads to improvement in the others.

LPS for Leadership Evaluation

The LPS integrates three critical elements: goals, results, and learning. As Figure 1.2 and the ISLLC standards illustrate, these critical elements overlap. The first critical element, administrator's goals and expectations for the year, may be represented in a school or district plan, assigned by a supervisor, required by compliance such as NCLB, or may be self-generated. The goals, a plan to implement those goals, benchmarks for monitoring the process, and determination of resources needed to achieve those goals provide a foundation for the collaboration—and learning—that is part of the LPS process.

The second critical element, results, is related to student learning, leadership learning, systems learning, and reform. Outcome data is benchmarked throughout the LPS process, and results are reported at the end of the school term. The data provide an opportunity to review classroom practices and teacher performance while assessing systemwide results. Ranging from test scores to attendance figures, student data indicate progress toward achieving goals and help determine future goals. LPS enables leaders to put acquired student and school data into context to see how the data support their goals and match up with desired results. The data also link leadership to the core function of the school system—that is, student learning. In addition to student data, leaders might use other result indicators such as effects of a new standards-based curriculum or observations of innovative instructional practices.

Outcome data inform a school leader of the level of effectiveness achieved and identify areas that require additional focus. Because outcome data identify both the needs of the school system and those of the school leader, LPS contributes to the entire leadership evaluation protocol or process.

The third critical element of leadership evaluation is professional learning. Here school leaders identify specific professional development interests in and needs for advancing their leadership effectiveness. Through LPS and its peer-coaching element, leaders focus on the purpose of their work, monitor results, and seek feedback through professional collaborations, highlighting the need for professional development in their work rather than in a workshop.

■ THE LPS PROCESS

The LPS process consists of four phases. These four phases guide the leader's professional journey through a process that begins with defining a purpose. It moves on to setting goals, continues by building a plan for action and collaboration, and culminates with an articulation of outcomes and identification of new steps. Each element embedded in the LPS facilitates school leaders in goal setting, learning, and reflection. (See Figure 1.3 for a brief overview of the process. See also Appendix A.)

Figure 1.3 LPS Process

Phases of the Leadership Performance System

Purpose and Function

Theory of Action • Leadership Attributes and Standards

Focus for Learning

Goals • Banner Question

Process and Structures for Collaboration

Professional Learning Community • Feedback and Collaborations

Planning • Engagement • Collecting Evidence

Outcomes for Action Planning and Reporting Results

Action Plan • Assess Results • Reflect on Learnings • Set New Goals

The LPS process includes defining the administrator's leadership role and identifying the skills and actions that promote the school community's achievement of its goals. Activities at each phase guide school leaders in directing their inquiries as they collect evidence of their learning and acquire new understanding through collegial collaborations, which enable them to reflect on the effectiveness of their leadership on improving school culture.

The core function of a school system is to enhance and serve the student as learner. All actions and decisions should support student achievement. LPS provides school leaders with guidance, collaboration, and checkpoints to serve that core function. It informs school leaders of areas for growth and learning in response to the school system's needs. That focus results in improved learning outcomes for students.

The four phases of the LPS process are the following:

1. Purpose and function for work
2. Focus for learning
3. Process and structures for collaboration
4. Outcomes for action planning and reporting results

Phase One: Purpose and Function for Work

Establishing a purpose involves declaring and refining one's *theory of action*, commitment, and expectations for professional work. Defining one's theory of action provides a basis for meaningful work. Putting it in writing reminds school leaders of their commitment to and passion for what they do. In the course of work each day, a majority of the decisions they make stem from their theory of action, beliefs, and commitment. A clear understanding of what those are builds the foundation for decision making and gives them a yardstick for determining progress and a focus for collaboration and planning.

Also in this phase, LPS participants convene as a professional community to determine the characteristics of an effective leader, to review the ISLLC standards, and to establish the scope of leadership work. This process helps them acquire a more profound wisdom and an enriched perspective about their work as a community of educational leaders who seek alignment and shared understandings.

If the district requires LPS as a means of formal evaluation of school leaders, the benchmarking to standards and performance goals becomes a valuable tool that aligns with professional learning and collaborations in the school system. As a robust leadership performance evaluation process, the LPS provides a vehicle through which a school district may choose to integrate or insert its specific and unique evaluation requirements.

LPS integrated the critical elements of an administrator's evaluation.

Phase Two: Focus for Learning

In phase two, school leaders determine the focus of their LPS and set their goals for the school and their own professional development. They establish an essential question (a *banner question*) that guides their learning and, subsequently, their leadership work.

LPS is both a structure and a process for aligning the school leader's goals with those of the district and school board.

LPS provides both a structure and a process that ideally aligns the professional development goals of the educational leader to school and district goals. The structure is the organization of LPS, including the four-phase design, tools, and worksheets, which help leaders focus on what they want to accomplish, where they want to grow, what goals they need to focus on, and results. The process includes the "softer" tools of collaboration, peer coaching, discussion, and reflection.

The school board has specific goals and expectations for the district. As they set their LPS plan, educational leaders need to clarify alignment (agreement) between their plans and goals and that which the school board requires of them. Because district goals are usually broadly written, school leaders have some latitude.

Phase Three: Process and Structures for Collaboration

A performance action plan represents the leader's goals and priorities. The action planning process is constructed by combining schoolwide goals and priorities, generated with the staff, as a shared purpose and focus for action at the school site. These priorities, aligned with the school leader's performance goals, are integrated into the performance action planning. For example, if a schoolwide priority is to accelerate student performance

Participating in the LPS process with peers heightens the learning experience because peers offer knowledgeable contributions, observations, and feedback.

in math and reading, the staff will work in grade-level teams to develop a plan for achieving that goal, and the school leader will align site-level work with his or her own goal to improve the school's AYP (annual yearly progress). Such an action plan includes a benchmarking process that helps to monitor progress, as well as tools that facilitate and engage the staff in planning, research, and implementation for school improvement.

Structures for Collaboration

Participating in LPS with colleagues heightens the learning experience. Peer collaborations offer feedback, observations, and knowledge sharing, which inform decision making. In school systems that have implemented LPS, school leaders meet at a roundtable discussion group or other existing professional structures such as a principal meeting or a cabinet session. Periodically during the year, school leaders meet in a scheduled professional structure to review progress with their goals, professional learning, and action planning. They also may meet informally with an LPS partner.

An LPS partner is a peer of choice with whom the leader meets informally throughout the LPS process to discuss specific LPS activities and to consider other challenges and events that emerge during the course of work. Partners provide coaching and support to each other.

Meeting with a roundtable group is more structured and occurs four to six times during the year (the LPS cycle). Lasting about an hour or so, these meetings are opportunities for participants—two to four sets of LPS partners or four to eight participants total—to go around the table and review their progress and share next steps. These sessions are valuable because they expose the participants to a variety of viewpoints. Some school teams meet monthly; others meet every two weeks once they realize how valuable the process is in their daily work.

Meeting as a group allows participants the time and structure to discuss challenges, needs, and achievements. The most valuable—and powerful—benefit is the team effort and the emergence of ideas that might not have surfaced without the focused time together. Instead of meeting and talking about isolated events, the roundtable group focuses on specific targets and needs in the context of their LPS purpose and goals, which allows for rich conversation, not just retellings of events and concerns.

The collaboration in this phase of the LPS process also builds a professional community whose members all have the expectation of problem solving, learning, and improving one's work. In this phase, school leaders participate in the professional development activities they identified in the focus phase and begin collecting evidence and lessons learned as they progress toward meeting their professional and school goals.

Phase Four: Outcomes for Action Planning and Reporting Results

In this fourth and final phase of the LPS process, school leaders assess the evidence and results of their efforts. In particular, they examine their progress toward achieving the goals, a school administrator will also include progress with their school plan, improving school and student performance, and participating in professional development opportunities that contribute to their knowledge and effectiveness as school leaders.

This is also a time for them to reflect on the LPS process and share their insights and learning with peers in a roundtable session. Based on their feedback, they may adjust their action planning process undertaking, set new goals, and establish a new banner question.

THE BENEFITS OF LPS ■

The LPS provides a structure and process for reflection, collaboration, and learning. Its multidimensional performance process allows for contextual learning and a variety of sources for feedback. The LPS purpose and goals provide direction for the participant and create the arena and topics for exploration. Most importantly, LPS has the potential to facilitate the

school leader's learning, allowing him or her to focus and construct their meaning of work and to measure progress. LPS increases collaboration, invites peer observation, and encourages community learning. It can be viewed as a container or organizer for the conversations, reflections, and inquiries about work.

As Figure 1.4 shows, the LPS process leaders do the following:

- ***Focus professional and personal growth.*** It identifies a target area for learning. Leaders select an area of concern or interest or one in which they need additional expertise and then articulate it in the form of a banner question.
- ***Create and adapt personal learning plans.*** It helps leaders select activities that contribute to their learning (inquiry) process, provide a variety of experiences, and highlight interactions with individuals and ideas.
- ***Collect evidence and lessons learned.*** As part of the process, leaders gather items that represent growth and reflect new understandings in the context of the banner question.
- ***Monitor progress.*** LPS assists in aligning performance goals and action plan priorities specific to the school leader's domain of responsibility.
- ***Collaborate with peers one-on-one and in groups.*** Leaders meet with an LPS partner or supervisor on an ongoing basis and in roundtable discussion groups with peers. Because groups may include colleagues with similar and different learning priorities, the opportunities for peer coaching and varied feedback are great.
- ***Sharpen management skills.*** Colleagues help each other identify management skills that get the job done. Leaders incorporate the skills into the banner question and, subsequently, into their professional development needs.
- ***Apply leadership skills.*** LPS participants identify characteristics of effective leaders and incorporate these characteristics into the banner question and professional development requirements.
- ***Draw on past knowledge and experiences.*** When forming the banner question and creating learning plans, leaders consider prior learning and use it as a starting point for inquiry.
- ***Observe and contribute to collegial development.*** LPS creates an environment in which every leader is a learner. Through collaboration with peers, participants act as both learners and leaders.
- ***Assess the impact and influence of school district systems.*** The process asks leaders to consider systems within the school and the district that support or interfere with outcomes related to the banner question.
- ***Reflect on values, attitudes, and experiences.*** School leaders collaborate with peers, write in their journals, collect data and evidence, reflect on learning activities, and have frequent and varied opportunities to consider colleagues' and their own points of view.

Figure 1.4 Benefits of the LPS

Benefits of the Leadership Performance System

- Focusing professional performance and learning
 - Creating and adapting personal performance plans
 - Collecting evidence of success
 - Monitoring progress
 - Collaborating with peers one-on-one and in groups
 - Sharpening management skills
 - Applying leadership skills
 - Drawing on past knowledge and experiences
 - Observing and contributing to collegial development
 - Assessing the impact and influence of the school district systems
 - Reflecting on one's performance, values, attitudes, and experiences
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While the LPS can play a role in a school system's evaluation process, it also can contribute to a leader's self-evaluation. Collegial collaborations can lead participants to recognize their own strengths and challenges. This self-awareness produces a greater likelihood that they will engage in learning opportunities in an effort to grow. The feedback provided in a trusting and respectful environment of a roundtable discussion or one-on-one meeting with a performance LPS partner assists leaders in identifying areas that will improve their effectiveness.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS AS LEARNERS ■

No one can mandate leaders to be learners. However, the leadership community can make a conscious decision to build a professional learning community, thus shaping its work and design to meet a shared purpose.

Lifelong learning is a demand of the information era. Knowledge is temporary, and everyone must be able to continually adapt and learn at a pace outside one's comfort range. Lifelong learning is the ability to continually enhance, modify, and restructure one's understanding by interacting with other people, ideas, and situations. These new understandings lead to new practices and models for learning and evaluation within the school system.

Educational leaders should experience and be able to model this ability as part of their leadership role in a school system. Thus, the role of educational leader demands attributes of *knowledge leadership*. A knowledge

leader has the ability to facilitate the transformation of data and information into knowledge, the capacity to apply new understandings to actual practice. A knowledge leader establishes professional structures and learning communities where participants continually inform and refine the system as they identify priorities, needs, and resources that are timely, relevant, and actionable (Dietz, Barker, & Giberson, 2005).

LPS provides the structure and process for educational leaders to perform as knowledge leaders. As they engage with colleagues, they expand their capacity and leadership repertoire. At the same time, they model the process for students and other community members. Through reflections and by continually incorporating new ideas into practice, they actually establish the attributes of a learning organization. The LPS process provides an envelope for the mind that provides both a framework and a context for the learner.

In each phase of LPS (Figure 1.5), participants must ask themselves a series of questions related to their professional goals and the goals of the school community they serve. As they progress, they take with them the knowledge and insights acquired in the previous phases. After they have completed the final phase and have assessed the outcomes, they must set new goals for growth and learning.

Figure 1.5 The School Leader's Progress Through the Four Phases of the LPS Process

Purpose and Role of Leadership

- Describe professional theory of action
- Define leadership performance and standards

Focus for Learning

- Focus for LPS in the school system
- Focus the leader's LPS theme and set goals through creation of a banner question—an essential question that will drive inquiry and learning for the current year

Process and Structures for Collaboration

- Meet with colleagues one-on-one and in roundtable group sessions
- Identify structures/groups already in place that can support your LPS
- Create performance plans
- Participate in professional development activities
- Collect evidence

Outcomes for Action Planning and Reporting Results

- Reflect on progress, share learning, and set new goals.

GETTING READY TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT YOUR LPS

When I first began to work with school systems in designing and implementing a leadership portfolio process, I faced great resistance. The overall response was, “We are too busy doing our work. We do not have time to DO a portfolio.” Administrators were so distracted with the demands of mandates, legal challenges, test scores, and the ongoing list of day-to-day demands, not to mention the school board and community’s vigilant watching, they could not take the time to make what they perceived was a scrapbook. However, some clusters of administrators I worked with truly tried to find the time, space, and energy to participate. They found themselves in the minority and eventually wanted to join the club of “I don’t have the time.” I was concerned, frustrated, but still eager to explore the possibilities of helping them clearly define their purpose for the portfolio and then design a process that would facilitate the process as a community of learners.

That was it! All of a sudden it dawned on me that while the portfolio might have been perceived as busywork, the notion of leaders taking the time for their own learning and development was just not a norm in their system. I thought of my own journey as an educational leader and the role of learning in my work as well as how I was fitting it in my professional life. Then the pieces started coming together.

First, if learning is essential for continuous improvement in education, then leaders must be learners. Second, the leadership role is so burdened with tactical and strategic planning and action that time for learning, reflection, and collaboration is sorely overlooked. Last, but not least, the practice of a professional community working and learning together is a missing link. By design, there are more competitive cultural norms than collaborative norms for educational leaders. However, if the portfolio process had proved to be so successful for teacher development and as a vehicle for building capacity in schools, could that portfolio process be redesigned to offer similar enhancements to the work of administrators?

These reflections led to development of a portfolio design and process to assist the work of educational leaders. The portfolio process

- builds a professional learning community,
- creates the space for reflections and collaboration, and
- accomplishes this in the context of goal setting and achievement toward meeting professional, site, and districtwide goals.

The portfolio has become a vehicle to move through the goal-oriented, tactical, and strategic work of educational leaders while it has built capacity in new areas, solidified learning from experiences, and built a professional community with collaboration and support for success.

Educational leaders are eager to have such a learning community in which to learn and grow. Currently, many school systems do not provide the opportunities for administrative professional growth. Using the portfolio process as an entry point for responding to this critical need, the work of leadership and the power of collaboration, reflection, and learning have led to systemic changes in school systems. The portfolio process, once

designed, implemented, and nurtured, provides a change that continues to add value to educational systems.

■ LPS PORTFOLIO

LPS can be captured in any form participants wish it to take. It can be a three-ring binder, a journal, a computer file, or a DVD. Accompanying the discussion of each phase of the process are worksheets and tools that school leaders can use as general organizers or journal entries. Leaders complete the information, evidence, and other materials according to their preferences and needs, unless the district prescribes a specific compilation technique for evaluation purposes.