

Knowledge Utilization Brief:

The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards



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As the job of an educational leader evolves and expands, clear and consistent leadership standards for the field become more important. To meet this need, the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), with financial support from The Wallace Foundation, led a significant effort to revise the national standards that guide preparation and practice for educational leaders in the U.S.

The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards guide the preparation of educational leaders. The two sets of NELP standards, one for building level leaders and one for district level leaders, address the most critical knowledge and skills areas for beginning building and district level educational leaders.

Why do we need the NELP standards?

The educational leadership profession has developed significantly since the crafting of the first set of educational leadership standards in 1996, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Standards (ISLLC).

Understanding has matured about how leadership contributes to student achievement. Specifically, research demonstrates that educational leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating challenging and supportive conditions conducive to student learning, and by supporting teachers, creating positive working conditions, allocating resources and constructing appropriate organizational policies and systems.

Given such changes, it is clear that educational leaders need new standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students.

How are the NELP and PSEL different?

The [Professional Standards for Educational Leaders \(PSEL\)](#) were approved by the NPBEA in November 2015. The PSEL standards, formerly known as ISLLC, are grounded in research and leadership experience and articulate the knowledge and skills expected of educational leaders (Canole & Young, 2013, CCSSO, 2008).

While aligned to the PSEL standards, the NELP standards serve a different purpose and provide greater specificity around performance expectations for beginning level building and district leaders. Whereas the PSEL standards define educational leadership broadly, the NELP standards specify what novice leaders and preparation program graduates should know and be able to do as a result of their completion of a high quality educational leadership preparation program.

NELP Specifies the Level of Performance: Beginning



Like the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards that preceded them, the

NELP standards were developed specifically with building and district leaders in mind and will be used to review educational leadership programs by the NELP Specialized Professional Association (SPA) (formerly known as the ELCC SPA) of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

Recognizing that the 2011 ELCC standards no longer fully reflected changes in education leadership practice, the adoption of new standards and policies at the state level, and the need to align to the new Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) standards, a committee of educational leadership stakeholders was developed to collaboratively revise the 2011 ELCC standards.

How were the NELP standards developed?

The work of the NELP Standards Development Committee began as soon as the PSEL standards were released. It involved reviewing CAEP Guidelines; gathering input from practitioners, state department of education representatives and higher education faculty on the 2011 ELCC standards (Young, 2016); and a rigorous review of empirical research regarding the practice and preparation of building and district leaders for high performing schools and districts. This work also involved the development of crosswalks between sets of important national and state leadership and educator preparation standards, and the development, review, external vetting and editing of draft standards.

Draft NELP Standards

Building Leader Standards	District Leader Standards
1. Mission, Vision and Improvement	1. Mission, Vision and Improvement
2. Ethics and Professional Norms	2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity, Inclusiveness and Cultural Responsiveness	3. Equity, Inclusiveness and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Learning and Instruction	4. Learning and Instruction
5. Community and External Leadership	5. Community and External Leadership
6. Operations and Management	6. Operations and Management
7. Building Professional Capacity	7. Policy, Advocacy and Governance
8. (The Internship)	8. (The Internship)

Each set of NELP standards include seven content standards and one internship standard. Public comment revealed strong support, with 86% approving or strongly approving the NELP standards and between 94 and 100% noting that the focus of the eight standards was warranted.

The revised draft was presented to and approved by the NPBEA in July of 2016 and then submitted to CAEP SPA Standards Committee for review and feedback.

Conclusion

Rooted in both research and effective practice, the NELP standards provide a framework for how to best prepare, support and evaluate educational leadership candidates as well as how to design, evaluate and approve or accredit educational leadership preparation programs for building and district leaders. Given the importance of educational leaders in fostering educational quality and student success, it is essential that preparation programs and the systems design to support and evaluate them are aligned to strong leadership standards like the new NELP standards.

References

Canole, M. & Young, M. D. (2013). *Standards for Educational Leaders: An Analysis*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). (2008). *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008*. Washington, DC: Author

Young, M. D. (2016, summer). National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards: What they are, how they were developed, and what purpose they serve. *UCEA Review*, 57(2), 4-5.



This brief is part of a Knowledge Utilization Brief series supported by a grant from The Wallace Foundation. The intent of the series is to highlight and share recent empirical research regarding effective leadership preparation and development, particularly research commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, with faculty, staff, and leaders at the program, institutional, and state levels, as these individuals are in positions to use this research to make positive changes. Available for downloading at <http://ucea.org/research-utilization-briefs/>

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