The 1996 release of the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) provided new blueprints of school leadership as a “complex and context-dependent activity” (Murphy, 2005, p. 174). The functions and indicators within the Standards were supported by empirical findings from research on school improvement and effectiveness, leadership practices within high-performing organizations, learning and teaching, and social justice. Thus, the Standards confirmed “the centrality of the principal’s role in ensuring student achievement through an unwavering emphasis on learning-centered leadership” (Gutherie & Schuermann, 2010). Within the ensuing decade, 46 states either adopted the ISLLC Standards with little or no modification or developed their own leadership standards to use as the framework for principal preparation, licensure, and in some instances performance evaluation (Barker, Orr, & Young, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno & Fusarelli, 2005; Catano & Stronge, 2006).

New expectations for student-achievement accountability and “lessons learned about education leadership over the past decade” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 1) evidenced need for new national standards that provided guidelines to support states in crafting leader standards appropriate to local contexts (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). This Brief provides an overview of two recent publications by The Wallace Foundation related to the development of new leader standards to address changed circumstances.

**Principal Pipeline initiative**

Eight urban districts—Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC), Denver Public Schools (CO), Gwinnett County Public Schools (GA), Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL), New York City Department of Education (NY), and Prince George’s County Public Schools (MD)—are participating in The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative. Launched in August 2011, the initiative provides a common structure for the six districts to cultivate leadership among young-career educators, enhance the quality of candidate pools for principal positions, support new principals, and strengthen principal evaluation systems. This multi-year initiative utilizes four strategies to strengthen and align the work expected of principals in those districts:

- **Leader standards**, to which the sites will align job descriptions, training, hiring requirements, evaluations, and professional development
- **High-quality training**, including recruitment, selective admissions, and preservice experiences aligned with district expectations for leaders
- **Selective hiring** for the most qualified applicants, and placement based on a match between the candidate and the school
- **On-the-job evaluation and support**: evaluation that addresses the capacity to improve teaching and learning; and support that includes mentoring and professional development addressing the needs that evaluation has identified (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. i).

The first report about this initiative, *Six Districts Begin the Principal Pipeline Initiative* (Turnbull et al., 2013), reports findings from qualitative research conducted at the six districts during the spring of 2012. In addition to reviewing work plans and progress reports, researchers interviewed 91 administrators working in the districts and their partner institutions. The report presents findings about (a) districts’ priorities, (b) leader standards, (c) preservice training, (d) selective hiring and placement, and (e) on-the-job evaluation and support. Despite contextual differences among the six districts, researchers note that the “districts’ vision of coherence” assures a “shared definition of the job of school leadership . . . [and] common language for multiple activities” (p. 44).
District-Based Leader Standards

A companion publication, *Recent Leader Standards* (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), presents new leader standards created by the six participating districts between August 2011 and June 2013. At each site, the standards were developed through broad-based engagement of teachers, school administrators, central-office staff, academic experts and other stakeholders to tailor these guidelines to fit the unique needs of their schools. . . . [and] shape how they train, place, evaluate and support their principals” (p. 3). Development of the unique district standards was informed by the reviews of the ISLLC standards and performance expectations (Sanders & Kearney, 2008), leadership behaviors assessed through the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007), and if relevant, exiting state-mandated standards. By paring down elements within the various existing standards and professional expectations into “agreed-on local standards,” the districts produced “a more comprehensive set focused on key expectations” (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 17).

Lessons Learned

The ISLLC Standards for Schools (CCSSO, 1996) were “a product of the profession” (Murphy, 2005, p. 179) because they were developed through comprehensive collaboration among leadership educators and scholars, representatives of professional associations, and leadership practitioners. Perhaps the Standards’ “greatest influence” (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007, p. 282) was on preservice preparation and professional licensure. When it became evident that revisions were needed due to the changed complexity of educational leadership, the ISLLC convened a new panel to draft new leadership guidelines and accompanying performance expectations (CCSSO, 2008; Sanders & Kearney, 2008). The new standards developed by the six urban districts featured in this *Brief* mirror that process and provide a process for contextualizing national and state standards to unique situations.

Selected References


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This brief, developed by Tricia Browne-Ferrigno, is part of a Research 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.

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