

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN WYOMING: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

**The Wyoming Advisory Committee to the Select Committee
for Statewide Education Accountability**

October 22, 2016

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND EVALUATION IN WYOMING

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Introduction

The Advisory Committee to the Select Committee on Statewide Education Accountability has addressed educational leadership support and evaluation in each of the last three years. This Advisory Committee previously produced *The Wyoming Model Leader and Educator Support and Evaluation System* report in 2014 that outlined a framework that districts could use to design locally-based evaluation and improvement systems for educators and leaders. The 2014 report outlines a useful evaluation framework and in 2015, the Advisory Committee produced a comprehensive framework for enhancing educational leadership in Wyoming that proved to be a bit too ambitious at this time. Therefore, the Select Committee directed the Advisory Committee for the 2016 interim to produce recommendations for modifying the existing statutory language regarding leadership evaluation to reflect what has been learned since the 2014 report was produced as well as reflecting the new reality under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

There is a justifiable focus on having a high quality teacher in every classroom as the key to maximizing student learning and growth. However, high quality teaching is best developed and fostered with highly capable educational leaders. In fact, the committee suggests that high quality leadership is a necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, condition for developing and sustaining an effective teaching corps, which should lead to high levels of student engagement, learning, and growth. There is no question that there are many intervening factors involved in school improvement (e.g., teachers' use of high-leverage instructional practices that then lead to increased student engagement and achievement), but the Advisory Committee argues that leadership is essential for sustaining high quality schools. The Select Committee has argued that teacher accountability could be left to the discretion local districts, within some broad parameters, if the school and leadership systems were functioning well. The Advisory Committee recommends maintaining requirements for leadership evaluation in statute, but limited to the two following recommendations:

- ✓ Require the adoption of common standards for educational leaders
- ✓ Require local school districts to implement a leader support and evaluation system aligned with the common standards

We provide additional details regarding these recommendations below.

Recommendations for Improved Educational Leadership in Wyoming

Recommendation #1: Common "Content" Standards for Educational Leaders

The Advisory Committee recommends the adoption of common standards for educational leaders that define high quality practice as well as the knowledge and skills necessary for leaders to improve the performance of low-performing schools and districts as documented by the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act school accountability determinations. These standards will apply to all leaders working in Wyoming, whether they were prepared in Wyoming or in another state. The standards for educational leadership described by the Wyoming Model Leader and Educator Support and Evaluation System represent expectations for exemplary performance. However, the standards referenced in the Advisory Committee's 2014 report were based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards developed in 2008. The ISLLC standards were revised in 2015, a year after the production of our 2014 report, as the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).

Wyoming's Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB) has adopted program approval standards aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders as the basis for accrediting programs (e.g., UW). The Advisory Committee recommends using the PSEL as Wyoming's standards for educational to align the pre-service and in-service evaluation expectations. However, the Advisory Committee strongly recommends not naming the standards in statute, but recommends that the legislature charge PTSB and the state board to adopt common standards for educational leaders to serve as a foundation for leadership evaluation in Wyoming.

Having common content standards that define the competencies and expectations for school and district leaders is critical for developing a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary for successful educational leadership in Wyoming that spans the period from before the candidate enters pre-service leadership education to ongoing training for school leaders. An overview of the PSEL standards follows. For the full text of the standards, please

see: <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2015/ProfessionalStandardsforEducationalLeaders2015forNPBEAFINAL.pdf>

Standard 1 **Mission, Vision, and Core Values:** Effective leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision and core values of education and academic success and well-being of each student.

- Standard 2** **Ethics and Professional Norms:** Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 3** **Equity and Cultural Responsiveness:** Effective educational leaders strive of equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 4** **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:** Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 5** **Community of Care and Support for Students:** Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 6** **Professional Capacity of School Personnel:** Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practices of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 7** **Professional Community for Teachers and Staff:** Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- Standard 8** **Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community:** Effective educational leaders engage families and community members in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s success and well-being.
- Standard 9** **Operations and Management:** Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student’s success and well-being.
- Standard 10** **School Improvement:** Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student’s success and well-being.

As noted previously, leaders meeting the requirements outlined in these standards would likely be considered exemplary leaders. The Advisory Committee stressed that while each of the standards presented above are necessary for effective leadership, there is likely a specific constellation (or multiple possible constellations) of knowledge and skills that will be required for schools in various contexts.

Recommendation #2: Require local school districts to implement a leader support and evaluation system aligned with the common standards

The Advisory Committee recommends charging the state board of education with either adopting new rules or modifying Chapter 29 to require that all districts align their school leader evaluation systems with the professional standards adopted by PTSB (the PSEL) and require all districts to evaluate all school leaders each year. The State Model leader support and evaluation system provides a strong foundation for districts to use or adapt to support leader improvement. The Advisory Committee recommends allowing districts to use a research-based leader support and evaluation system that best meets local needs, but that can support valid evaluations of its leaders related to the leadership standards described above. Therefore, this recommendation must also entail statutory language directing local school boards to implement the evaluation system prescribed by the state board of education. While the Advisory Committee recommends evaluating all school leaders every year against the standards described above, the committee does not intend for leaders to be evaluated against every standard every year. Such an approach would likely produce some unintended negative consequences by encouraging supervisors to rush through the evaluation in order to “check off” boxes. More importantly, supervisors and leaders must be allowed, even expected, to tailor the evaluations to best meet the improvement needs of each school leader.

Summary and Discussion

The Advisory Committee gave considerable thought to addressing the leadership needs in Wyoming so that each school has a principal capable of leading instructional efforts so Wyoming students are able to meet increasingly richer learning targets and demonstrate readiness for meaningful postsecondary options. Maximizing the quality of school leadership in Wyoming must involve multiple partners including the Wyoming Department of Education, the Professional Teaching Standards Board, the University of Wyoming, Wyoming school districts, professional organizations, and outside providers. The Advisory Committee offers proposed legislative language for W.S. 21-2-304 and 21-3-110 in Appendix A designed to enact these recommendations.

Appendix A: Proposed Legislative Language

21-2-304. Duties of the state board of education.

(b) In addition to subsection (a) of this section and any other duties assigned to it by law, the state board shall:

~~(xv) Working in conjunction with the Wyoming Department of Education, the Professional Standards Teaching Board, and the Advisory Committee to the Select Committee on Statewide Education Accountability report recommendations to the legislature not later than January 1, 2017 regarding promulgating rules and regulations for the implementation and administration of a comprehensive school district teacher performance evaluation system based on the standards for professional practice and other recommendations described in “The Wyoming Model Leader and Educator Support and Evaluation System,” a 2014 report to the Wyoming legislature. The evaluation system shall clearly prescribe standards for highly effective performance, effective performance, performance in need of improvement and ineffective performance. Rules and regulations adopted under this paragraph shall to the extent the statewide accountability system is not compromised, allow districts the opportunity to refine the system to meet the individual needs of the district. The performance evaluation system shall also include reasonable opportunity for state and district provision of mentoring and other professional development activities made available to teachers performing unsatisfactorily, which are designed to improve instruction and student achievement;~~

(xvi) Working in conjunction with the Wyoming Department of Education, the Professional Standards Teaching Board, and the Advisory Committee to the Select Committee on Statewide Education Accountability report recommendations to the legislature not later than January 1, 2017 regarding promulgating rules and regulations for implementation and administration of a comprehensive performance evaluation system for school and district leadership, including superintendents, principals and other district or school leaders serving in a similar capacity. The performance evaluation system shall be based upon measures of professional practice adopted by the Professional Standards Teaching Board. The system shall also allow districts opportunity to refine the system to meet the individual needs of the district and shall include reasonable opportunity for state and district provision of mentoring and other professional development activities made available to district administrative personnel performing unsatisfactorily, designed to improve leadership, management and student achievement;

21-3-110. Duties of boards of trustees.

(a) The board of trustees in each school district shall:

~~(xvii) Not later than school year 2019-2020 and each school year thereafter, require the performance of each initial contract teacher to be evaluated summatively based in part upon student achievement measures as prescribed by rule and regulation of the state board under W.S. 21-2-304(b)(xv). The teacher shall receive a copy of each evaluation of his performance;~~

~~(xviii) Not later than school year 2019-2020 and each school year thereafter, establish a teacher performance evaluation system and require the performance of each continuing contract teacher to be evaluated summatively based in part upon student achievement measures as prescribed by rule and regulation of the state board under W.S. 21-2-304(b)(xv). The teacher shall receive a copy of each evaluation of his performance;~~

~~(xix) Not later than school year 2019-2020 and each school year thereafter, based in part upon student achievement measures established by the state board of education under W.S. 21-2-304(b)(xv), performance evaluations shall serve as a basis for improvement of instruction, enhancement of curriculum program implementation, measurement of both individual teacher performance and professional growth and development and the performance level of all teachers within the school district, and as documentation for unsatisfactory performance that may lead to dismissal, suspension and termination proceedings under W.S. 21-7-110;~~

(xxx) Not later than school year 2018-2019 and each school year thereafter, in addition to paragraphs (xvii), (xviii) and (xix), require the performance of each school district leader, including ~~superintendents and~~ principals and other district or school leaders serving in a similar capacity to be evaluated in accordance with the statewide education accountability system established under W.S. 21-2-204. Not later than August 15, 2019 and August 15 of each school year thereafter, in accordance with rules and regulations of the state board, the district board shall also provide the state board written reports verifying school district leader performance and providing performance evaluations scores;

(b) On or before ~~June 1, 2020 and June 1~~ of each school year thereafter, each school district superintendent shall provide a report to the board of trustees identifying all ~~teachers and on or before June 1, 2019, and June 1~~ of each school year thereafter, identifying all school ~~and district~~ leaders within the district whose performance, through evaluations conducted under paragraphs (a)(xvii) through (xix) and (xxx) of this section, has been determined in need of improvement or ineffective for that school year. The report shall include a summary of mentoring and other professional development activities made available to the identified school and district leaders and teachers to improve instruction and student achievement. Not later than July 1, 2019 for school and district leaders, and July 1, 2020 for district teachers, and July 1 of each school year thereafter, the board shall file a report with the department of education certifying compliance with this subsection.