

**Building Block: #8: Create a leadership development system that enables school leaders to create and manage high performance schools effectively**

**GAP ANALYSIS**

*Attracting and grooming a high-quality pool of candidates for the principalship*

Although some superintendents of schools in the United States try to identify teachers who might be good school leaders in the future and give them opportunities to develop their leadership capacity, the Commission knows of no state that does this as a matter of statewide policy. As a result, the pool from which the vast majority of future school leaders comes is typically made up of people who volunteer for the role and who then enroll in state-required postsecondary preparation programs that rarely, if ever, assess applicants' potential as good school leaders. In contrast, top performing countries have developed policies to attract teachers who have been carefully identified as people with high leadership potential. These teachers are then given a carefully chosen set of opportunities to develop those skills while still teaching, thus creating a large, very high quality pool of candidates for school leader positions. No American state has developed policy structures of this kind on the scale required to meet all their school leadership needs.

In order to become certificated as a principal, Maryland principals are required to receive a relatively high score on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), however this test is not performance-based like those used in many top-performing countries. A recent study by researchers at Vanderbilt University found that the SLLA is not effective in predicting principal job performance. While individual districts in Maryland may do so, the state, like other U.S. states, generally does not actively identify and groom prospective school principals. Instead, it relies on individuals to self-identify and enroll in a preparation program. However, the Promising Principals Academy, started in 2014, provides leadership development for up to 48 candidates per year (in comparison to the projected 388 principal preparation program completers for 2016-17 who self-select). In another program of note, Prince George's County partnered with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) to develop an aspiring principal program that has a rigorous selection process in an effort to develop a talent pipeline for that district. To date, roughly 175 aspiring principals have been trained in Prince George's County.

*Tying the development of school leaders to the system's goals and strategies*

The top performers provide future leaders with the modern management skills derived from the best research on leadership from the world's best business schools and military academies. That knowledge is matched with the excellent knowledge of curriculum and instruction that comes from the fact that the leaders they develop have come exclusively from the ranks of their best teachers and teacher leaders. But their systems are also designed to do something else that is very important to them. They are designed to give their future leaders the knowledge and skills they need to fully implement the specific structures, strategies, policies

and practices that underlie that country's overall design for their high performance system. They are seen as implementers of the specific kind of high performance management system their own country has developed as a matter of policy. They do not leave the curriculum for school leadership development up to the schools of education. They expect the curriculum of the schools of education to embrace these imperatives, because the education and development of their future leaders is the linchpin of their strategy for implementing the strategies they have chosen to drive their education system forward. No American state has yet developed this kind of policy framework for the development of their school leaders.

*Developing leaders who have the knowledge and skills to manage modern professionals in the modern professional workplace*

The work organization of the typical American school has more in common with the organization of blue collar work in early 20<sup>th</sup> century factories than with the kinds of modern work organization typically found in modern professional practices and workplaces. In industrial age workplaces, most of the skill required to make the important decisions is found in the managers, who are expected to direct the work. In the latter, most of the expertise is found in the front-line doctors and engineers and other professionals, and the leadership is expected to create and sustain organizations that enable and support those professionals as they make the important day to day decisions, usually working in groups, that need to be made. The top performers, are, as matter of *policy*, moving toward professional forms of work organization in their school. Because managing professionals is so different from managing people in industrial work organizations, the top performers put a lot of effort into giving their school leaders the skills they will need to manage and support highly skilled professionals working in modern forms of organizations explicitly designed to support professional work. In the United States, matters of school organization in this sense are not normally addressed as matters of policy if they are addressed at all.

*Creating an environment in which school leaders have the incentives and support to get better and better at the work*

In a growing number of top performing countries, there is a well-developed career ladder for school leaders that is an extension of the career ladder for teachers. Just as for teachers, as one ascends this career ladder, one acquires more responsibility, more authority, more status, and more compensation. As in the case for teachers, this creates an environment in which there is a never-ending incentive for school leaders to get better and better at the work. Again, as in the case with teachers, it is frequently difficult if not impossible to ascend the career ladder without taking multiple assignments to serve as a school leader in a variety of schools serving large proportions of disadvantaged students. This policy provides many schools serving large populations of disadvantaged students with exceptionally qualified leaders and, at the same time, assures the state of a large supply of school leaders at the upper levels of the system who have served in schools populated by many different kinds of students.

Maryland does not have a statewide career ladder system for principals. There is, however, a pilot principal career ladder in place in Baltimore City, upon which the state could build as it creates a world class system and Prince George’s County has been developing a nationally recognized system for training school leaders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maryland should establish a set of aligned policies to bring the initial education and training of new school leaders, including principals, district administrators and other leadership roles, in the State up to global standards, and to help Maryland school leaders develop the leadership and management skills they will need to make their schools successful and, in particular, to fully implement the recommendations made in this report in every school and district in the state. These policies include:
  - a. A career ladder system for school leaders should be developed in the career ladder system Maryland creates for teachers, described in Building Block #6. A series of steps for school and district leaders, which should be built as a branch of the career ladder structure after mastery of the fully–proficient step for teachers, thus assuring that potential all school leaders in Maryland have demonstrated the skills and knowledge needed to be highly competent instructional leaders before they are groomed and trained for school leadership positions. The State should require that individuals who wish to ascend the career ladder for school leaders have significant experience and success at schools that represent the demographic and economic diversity of the school districts in which they have worked. Ascension on the career ladder should be based on proven outcomes and potential for further leadership growth. Further, in the upper reaches of the school leadership career ladder, school leaders should be expected to serve as mentors to new leaders of schools serving large proportions of low-performing students
  - ~~b. As the success of a school leader in producing strong student outcomes grows, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the leader and the leader’s team, more autonomy should be provided to that school leader for making school level decisions.~~
  - ~~b. Maryland should consider moving to an assessment of leaders that is aligned with outcomes and is predictive of effective leaders~~
  - c. While most of the school leaders would rise through the ranks of first being an exemplary teacher, Maryland should ~~also allow~~consider allowing flexibility in how one becomes a school leader so as not to preclude ~~truly-unique~~truly-unique talented and passionate leaders who did not start their career as a teacher and, in fact, perhaps started their career in a non-education–related field
  - d. The State should use its program approval powers to require higher education institutions that offer programs leading to school leadership certifications to

- carefully evaluate the potential of candidates to be effective school leaders. The evaluation should include evidence that the school district in which that individual has been working as a teacher has identified that individual as someone with a high potential for leadership and can present a record showing that the individual has been offered various teacher leadership roles and has performed well in those roles.
- e. Universities wishing to offer graduate level courses in school administration for certification should present evidence that 1) their curriculum will enable the graduates of those programs to successfully organize and manage schools and school systems in a way that closely tracks the practices of the countries with the highest and most equitable student performance and equity in the world; 2) their curriculum will enable their graduates to manage highly skilled professionals working in a modern professional work environment; 3) their curriculum will give the students in these program the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement the recommendations made in this report; and 4) their curriculum will enable school leaders to effectively conduct peer observation and evaluation of other school personnel
  - f. The university-school district collaboratives described in Building Block #5 should be tasked with developing a pilot leadership career ladder and demonstrating effective ways to implement the State system for creating an abundant supply of high quality school leaders for Maryland schools. The recommendations made immediately above should be phased in over time
2. Maryland should train every currently serving superintendent, senior central office official, and principal in the State to give them the vision, motivation, skills and knowledge they will need to implement the recommendations made in this report. That training should be carried out as a high priority initiative as early in the implementation of this report as possible. The training should be designed to get all of Maryland’s school leaders, at every level, thoroughly conversant with the recommendations in this report and to help them develop the capacity to implement those recommendations well.
  3. School leaders should reflect the diversity of the student population and through their training as both teachers and leaders provide culturally relevant instructional techniques and leadership in their schools