

Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island

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Leadership Policy

“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”

The Wallace Foundation

Introduction

School leadership matters. It matters to everyone directly and indirectly connected to schools. For the students who attend schools in Rhode Island, the quality of school leadership affects their school experiences and their levels of achievement. For the educators who work in Rhode Island schools, leadership affects their professional lives and their working conditions as well as how they conduct the important work of improving student learning. School leadership also affects the confidence that families and other community members have that their children are receiving a quality education and that the community’s resources are being used efficiently and effectively. According to a report published by the Wallace Foundation in 2006, school leadership is “second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”

Because leadership in schools makes such a difference, the recruitment, training and support of quality school leaders cannot be left to chance. No longer can we just hope that the right people will choose to step forward to become school leaders and trust that their initial training and professional development will sufficiently prepare them for the challenges facing schools. Students, community members, and educators need assurance that the processes and systems surrounding the recruitment, development, and retention of school leaders will result in the presence of high quality leadership in their schools.

To ensure high quality leadership for all schools, Rhode Island educators and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) have collaborated to develop the *“Rhode Island Standards-based System of Leadership Performance.”* This system values school leadership and establishes direction for improving, supporting, and rewarding the performance of the individuals who take on the challenges of leading schools.

The System of Leadership Performance has three essential elements: (1) Leadership Standards; (2) Policies and Conditions for improving school leadership; and, (3) Training and Professional Development. The visual below illustrates the interrelationship of the essential elements.



Leadership Standards

Standards outline required knowledge and skills. To ensure that classroom teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary for meeting the needs of a diverse range of learners, the Rhode Island Board of Regents have adopted the *Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards* (RIPTS). The RIPTS help guide educator preparation and mentoring, as well as educators' continued professional growth. While designed for classroom educators, the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards also provide a foundation of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for school leaders. More is expected, however, of the administrators, department chairs, head teachers, and other teacher leaders who assume leadership for engaging others in assessing and improving the effectiveness of district and school practices. Not every standard applies to every leadership position in the same way; precise levels of responsibility will vary depending on the degree to which authority and autonomy is granted to the position in question. That is the nature – and the challenge – of aligning education systems that require both hierarchical and distributive leadership models.

This document, the *Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island*, outlines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for educators who assume leadership responsibilities. The articulated knowledge, skills, and dispositions are based upon the national Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and are grouped into six standards that address: (a) mission, vision, and goals; (b) learning and teaching; (c) managing organizational systems and safety; (d) collaborating with key stakeholders; (e) ethics and integrity; and (f) the education system. These standards provide direction for the preparation of leaders, the mentoring and coaching of new school leaders, leaders' ongoing professional development, and the performances on which leaders will be evaluated.

Policies and Conditions for Improving School Leadership

The Standards for Educational Leaders in Rhode Island articulate high expectations for the performance of school leaders. To meet such high expectations, school leaders, like the students for whom they are responsible, must engage their responsibilities under conditions and policies that support them in meeting pre-determined expectations. The

Rhode Island Standards-based System of Leadership Performance addresses these conditions and policies.

The *System of Leadership Performance* recognizes that leaders develop knowledge and expertise as they gain experience over time. To assist them in developing their expertise as leaders, the system provides school leaders with mentoring and support from more experienced colleagues at the beginning of their careers. Once they gain experience, educational leaders must be supported by an aligned system that provides opportunities for ongoing professional development designed to help them meet emerging school leadership challenges and to help them grow as leaders.

Because the knowledge and skills outlined in the standards are the performances valued by school leaders, the evaluation of school leaders should be grounded in the *Standards for Educational Leaders*. Instead of a simple checklist, the evaluation of leaders' performances must come from a variety of sources and use multiple sources of evidence for both summative and formative purposes. As professionals, school leaders use the Leadership Standards to evaluate their own performance and use this information, along with other evaluations, to direct and inform their Professional Development Plans (I-Plans) and the other professional development in which they engage. The *System of Leadership Performance* also requires that districts' formal evaluation systems use a variety of sources of evidence to assess and evaluate leaders on clearly articulated levels of performance. Those educators whose performance is deemed exemplary should be rewarded and compensated for their superior leadership performance.

Training and Professional Development

The *Rhode Island Standards-based System of Leadership Performance* helps to ensure that leaders' professional development opportunities are guided by the Leadership Standards. RIDE, institutional of higher education, districts, and other professional organizations collaborate to offer professional development opportunities to leaders that are designed to engage leaders in ways that will bring about new knowledge and skills that address specific standards within the context of their schools and districts.

Standards for Educational Leaders define the knowledge and skills expected from leaders and help direct leaders' I-Plans and the professional development opportunities in which they engage as well as the performances on which leaders are evaluated. Rhode Island's system of leadership recognizes that the challenges facing leaders are always evolving and changing; likewise, leaders' professional growth must be continuous throughout their careers.

Leadership Dispositions

Leaders choose and engage in leadership actions based upon their personal beliefs and dispositions as well as upon their professional knowledge and skills. More than ever, schools in Rhode Island need leaders who possess certain dispositions and beliefs, as well as exceptional professional knowledge and skill. While dispositions alone will not guarantee that leaders will be successful, such dispositions do provide an

ethical and moral framework for leaders' actions. As Thomas Sergiovanni has stated, "*The true leader is the one who follows first.*"

First and foremost, we need leaders in Rhode Island who are advocates for knowledge and learning and who recognize and believe that student learning is the primary purpose of schools. These leaders understand the importance of ensuring that students have a safe and orderly learning environment in which they are emotionally able to learn. Leaders believe that such school environments are best created by working with colleagues and enlisting the support and involvement of the parents and families of the students. They know, too, that environments are dynamic and that in order to improve students' learning opportunities, educators themselves must continually engage in professional development focused on improved student learning.

Leaders recognize that the students attending Rhode Island schools have diverse learning needs and come from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Leaders welcome this diversity and celebrate it as an asset to the school's educational programs. They engage community members in culturally-competent ways to enlist the support of families and other community members in the education of their students.

Just as leaders hold high expectations for students' achievement and behavior, they also hold high expectations for themselves and others. They believe their efforts can have a positive impact on their students' academic achievement and on the students' lives and hold themselves personally accountable for student learning. Leaders acknowledge that their assumptions and beliefs form the foundation for their actions so they continuously reflect, and engage their colleagues in reflecting upon assumptions and beliefs to ensure that these beliefs and assumptions do not limit students' access to learning.

As citizens and as professionals serving a public trust, educators follow the laws and regulations that pertain to public education and they engage in ethical behavior. They understand that serving in a public school opens them up to scrutiny and that they must be accountable to the public for operating schools effectively and efficiently. As leaders, they understand their roles and responsibilities in assisting policy makers by advocating for students and helping policy makers to identify and respond to and influence issues, trends, and potential changes that affect educational policies.

Leaders in Rhode Island are dedicated to continuous improvement based upon data that provides an accurate picture of the current effectiveness of the school. They contrast these data with the district/school mission and their vision for improvement and place school improvement at the forefront of their efforts knowing that the needs of students must always come before personal interests.

Conclusion

Rhode Island has recognized the value of high quality leadership and the vital role that leaders play in ensuring student learning and in effectively and efficiently operating schools. This recognition has led to the development of Rhode Island's *Standards-*

based System of Leadership Performance, which sets direction for the recruitment, development, evaluation, retention and rewarding of school leaders in Rhode Island. As with any strong system constructed to bring about a desired result, the parts of the system are each of high quality and are integrally linked. The *System of Leadership Performance* aligns leadership standards, policies and conditions, and ongoing professional development to ensure that schools and district in Rhode Island have the high quality leadership required to meet the challenges facing Rhode Island schools.

Each of the six Standards for Educational Leaders in Rhode Island requires certain dispositions to be effectively implemented. The chart on the next page lists the dispositions of leaders and the standards for which the dispositions are most important.

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is hereby charged with the task of developing performance-based indicators for each of the Standards for Educational Leadership, including each respective “Element” of the six Standards. While not regulatory in nature, these indicators shall provide the core structure for evaluation and self-assessment tools to be used within local educational agencies to ensure fidelity with the Rhode Island’s *Standards-based System of Leadership Performance*.

Table of Leadership Dispositions and the Standards Most Impacted

| Leadership Dispositions Educational leaders believe in, value, and are committed to: | Standard 1 | Standard 2 | Standard 3 | Standard 4 | Standard 5 | Standard 6 |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>Each student learning</i> | X | X | | | | |
| <i>High expectations for students, staff, and community members</i> | X | X | | X | X | |
| <i>Continuous evidence-based improvement</i> | X | | | | | |
| <i>Collaboration with all stakeholders</i> | X | X | X | X | | |
| <i>Reflection and examination of assumptions and beliefs</i> | X | | | | | X |
| <i>Learning as the fundamental purpose of school</i> | | X | | X | | X |
| <i>Affirming diversity</i> | X | X | X | X | | X |
| <i>Creating a safe and supportive learning environment</i> | | | X | | | |
| <i>Service to student learning and others</i> | | | X | | | |
| <i>Operating efficiently and effectively</i> | | | X | | | |
| <i>Equity</i> | X | X | X | X | | |
| <i>The mission, vision, and goals over personal interests</i> | | | | | X | |
| <i>Assuming personal responsibility for actions</i> | | | | | X | |
| <i>Continuous professional development and growth</i> | | X | | X | X | |
| <i>Influencing policies</i> | | | | | X | |
| <i>Advocating for education and for students</i> | | X | | | | X |
| <i>Upholding laws and regulations and modeling ethical conduct</i> | | | | | X | X |

Rhode Island Leadership Standards

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Goals

Standard 1: Education leaders ensure student achievement by guiding the development, articulation, implementation, and sustenance of a shared vision of learning and setting high expectations for each student.

Element IA: Mission, Vision and Goals for Teaching and Learning

The mission, vision, and goals establish clear and measurable high expectations for all students and educators.

Element IB: Shared Commitments to Implement the Mission, Vision, and Goals

The process of creating and sustaining the mission, vision, and goals is inclusive, building common beliefs and dispositions and genuine commitment among all stakeholders to implement the mission, vision, and goals.

Element IC: Continuous Improvement toward the Mission, Vision, and Goals

Continuous improvement toward achieving the mission, vision, and goals requires the use of research and best practices; effective district and school planning, adaptive change processes; allocations of resources, prioritizing of activities, and systematically monitoring progress.

Standard 2: Learning and Teaching

Standard 2: Education leaders ensure the achievement and success of each student by monitoring and continuously improving learning and teaching.

Element 2A: Building a professional culture

Achieving the mission, vision, and goals requires a strong collaborative professional culture focused on student learning and the development of professional competencies that lead to quality instruction.

Element 2B: Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction

Effective, research-based instructional practices aligned with national and Rhode Island standards are necessary to ensure that the diverse needs of each student are met.

Element 2C: Assessment and Accountability

Appropriate strategies for assessment, evaluation, performance management, and accountability are necessary to accurately monitor and evaluate progress toward the mission, vision, and goals.

Standard 3: Managing Organizational Systems and Safety

Standard 3: Education leaders ensure the success of each student by supervising and managing organizational systems and resources for a safe, high performing learning environment.

Element 3A: Protecting the Welfare and Safety of Students and Staff

Leaders ensure a safe environment by addressing real and potential challenges to the physical and emotional safety and security of the school community that interrupt learning and teaching.

Element 3B: Aligning and Obtaining Human Resources

Leaders establish an infrastructure for personnel that operates in support of learning and teaching.

Element 3C: Aligning and Obtaining Fiscal Resources

Leaders establish an infrastructure for finance that operates in support of improving learning and teaching.

Element 3D: Managing Operational Systems

Leaders collaborate to supervise both daily and ongoing management structures and practices that enhance learning and teaching.

Standard 4: Collaborating with Key Stakeholders

Standard 4: Education leaders ensure the success of each student by collaborating with stakeholders to respond to diverse community interests and needs and to mobilize community resources that improve student achievement.

Element 4A: Collaborate with Families and Other Community Members

Leaders partner with families and community members to develop and evaluate programs, services, and staff outreach to improve student learning.

Element 4B: Community Interests and Needs

Leaders respond and contribute to community interests and needs to provide the best possible education for students and their families.

Element 4C: Maximizing Community Resources

Leaders collaboratively maximize opportunities through sharing the resources of schools, districts and community organizations and agencies to provide critical support for all children and families.

Standard 5: Ethics and Integrity

Standard 5: Education leaders ensure the success of each student by modeling personal development, ethical behavior and acting with integrity.

Element 5A. Maintains Ethical and Legal Standards of the Profession

Leaders demonstrate appropriate ethical and legal behavior.

Element 5B. Personal Values and Beliefs

Leaders continuously examine their personal assumptions, values, beliefs, and practice to achieve the mission, vision, and goals for student learning.

Element 5C. Maintain high standards for self and others

Leaders perform the work required for high levels of personal and organizational performance by acquiring new knowledge, skills, and capacities needed to fulfill responsibilities for accountability for student learning.

Standard 6: The Education System

Standard 6: Education leaders ensure the success of each student by influencing interrelated educational systems of political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts in response to needs of their students.

Element 6A. Professional Influence

Leaders improve the broader political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of education for all students and families by participating and exerting professional influence in the local community and the larger educational policy environment.

Element 6B. Managing Local Decisions within the Larger Educational Policy Environment

Leaders manage effective local decision-making that both adheres and contributes to policies and political support for excellence and equity in education.

Element 6C. Policy Engagement

Leaders engage policy makers to inform and improve education policy.

Glossary & Definition of Terms

Adaptive Change Processes – Adaptive change processes are those that require new discoveries, experiments and adjustments from different places in the school or district and involve changing attitudes, values and behaviors. In order for adaptive change to be successful, educators and personnel involved in the situation must support and internalize required changes.

Cultural Competence - Cultural competence requires that organizations define a set of set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally. These values and principles include: (1) valuing diversity; (2) knowledge of the district/school's current beliefs and practices; (3) managing the dynamics of difference; (4) continually acquiring cultural knowledge; and (5) adapting district/school practices to the diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.

Differentiated Instruction - To differentiate instruction is to recognize students varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, and to react responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process.

Goals - Goals are descriptions of what district/school personnel plan to accomplish.

Local Educational Agency – The term “local educational agency” means a public board of education/school committee, or other public authority legally constituted within the State for either administrative control or direction of one or more Rhode Island public elementary schools or secondary schools.

Mission - A mission statement is a brief statement of the overall function of a school or district and articulates the fundamental purpose(s). A mission statement answers the question, “For what purpose(s) does the district/school exist?”

Professional Culture - Professional culture refers to a school's values, beliefs, traditions, operating principles, and the internal work environment.

Stakeholders – Community and other members who have an interest in, or are concerned about children's educations and the operation of the school/district. Stakeholders typically include: students, families, education staff, and all community members and organizations that serve education, children, and the families of children.

Standards-based – Standards-based reform is basing your curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation on a set of standards that have been widely agreed upon and accepted by the general professional community.

Vision – A vision articulates the desired future state of the district/school. A vision describes the direction(s) in which the district/school are headed, what it intends to be, and how it desires to function and be viewed in the future.

“Our work, for which we will be held accountable, is to maintain, justify and articulate sound, comprehensive programs of instruction for children and youth.”

John I. Goodlad