EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
With approximately 2,200 principals and 1,300 assistant principals currently serving in Missouri schools, an estimated 1,100 administrator certificates issued annually and roughly 300 new principals hired each year, the implications for teacher and student success are significant.

“Supporting and developing effective building principals is a critical component in helping all students reach their potential. Through broad-based collaborative effort, Missouri is moving beyond simply identifying leadership standards and competencies by intentionally building leadership capacity in support of our students, schools and communities.”

*Missouri Commissioner of Education, Dr. Margie Vandeven*

**The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)**

The primary purpose of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) is the development and support of effective school leaders. In the fall 2014, a group of key stakeholders, currently engaged in principal development and support, were convened by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to identify the essential competencies of a transformational principal. These main competencies of transformational leadership were clustered into 5 categories:
These domains, summarize the main roles a principal must assume, often times simultaneously, to effectively lead a school that is focused on teaching and learning. Each domain is described through a particular set of competencies.

The competencies or specific skills associated with effective leadership, were identified and organized across the MLDS Continuum. The MLDS Continuum extends from aspiring, to emerging, to developing and then to transformational levels of leadership. The MLDS fosters development of leadership competencies in a progressive manner. Each level represents advancement in leadership growth across a principal’s career beginning with pre-service preparation.

EXAMPLE:

The **Principal** as the **Instructional Leader** ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

| Leadership Competency #4—Engages and supports staff to vertically and horizontally align curriculum to state/district standards (PSEL 4a, b, 6d; 9:10a,e) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aspiring Leader** | **Emerging Leader** | **Developing Leader** | **Transformational Leader** |
| Understands standards as they apply to horizontal and vertical alignment of local curricula and content areas. | Examines and becomes familiar with the existing curriculum and learning standards. | Facilitates staff discussions to ensure curriculum is comprehensive, rigorous, aligned, and engaging and supports continuity and fidelity across all grades and content areas. | Ensures staff regularly collaborates to continuously monitor and adjust the vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum to improve student learning. |

The **Distinguished Transformational Leader** coaches, trains and/or mentors others in how to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

The **Principal** as the **Instructional Leader** ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

| Leadership Competency #5—Supports staff use of a variety of research-based practices appropriate to the intended content. (PSEL2b; 4b,c,d,e, 10a,f) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aspiring Leader** | **Emerging Leader** | **Developing Leader** | **Transformational Leader** |
| Understands a variety of research-based instructional practices and how to appropriately match learning content | Identifies existing instructional practices and reinforces those that are appropriate to the learning content | Builds teacher capacity with a variety of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content | Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content |

| Leadership Competency #6—Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback on teacher practice and student response. (PSEL2b; 4b,d,6a,e,f,10c,e,f) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understands and engages in meaningful feedback related to effective teacher practice | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to build teacher practice and student response | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to intentionally meet individual teacher strengths and areas for growth | Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers’ instructional practice |
In addition to significant research supported methods and practices, each leadership competency has been cross-walked with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).

In addition to the development of the leadership framework and competencies, an array of professional learning experiences are currently being developed to support principal growth across the continuum. Individual competencies are not addressed separately or in sequence, but are embedded in distinct Learning Experiences across the five identified domains. A description of Emerging Level Learning Experience 1 is noted below.

**Emerging Level Learning Experience 1:**

**Critical Firsts- How successful school leaders build positive momentum by succeeding at key initial leadership tasks and opportunities.**

In **Critical Firsts**, the school administrator learns the importance of making a positive impact as an emerging leader. The experience helps school administrators be more proactive and purposeful as they plan initial school engagements. Participants will examine best practices, tools and protocols for designing successful first opportunities typical of the opening of a new school year.

The learning experience **Critical Firsts** seeks to:

- A. Increase emerging level leaders’ awareness of the large and persistent effects of first experiences.
- B. Identify key windows of opportunity for creating success and positive momentum in typical, beginning of the year school experiences.
- C. Provide school leaders with practical and timely strategies for creating successful and future-shaping initial school experiences.

Each Learning Experience is divided into specific “Treatments” that engage participants in activities and approaches designed to foster mastery of the competencies. The Emerging Level curriculum includes six learning experiences that utilize a total of thirty-one embedded treatments. Participating principals engage in these learning experiences at individual, regional or state levels.

The MLDS serves as a blueprint for developing and supporting transformational school principals through a comprehensive system of learning modules that are engaging and relevant. Productive learning environments require skillful leadership. Through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders and applied understandings, the aim of putting a capable leader in every building across Missouri shifts from wishful thinking to purposeful action wherein effective leadership is achieved by design.
With the framework of the MLDS firmly established, the capacity for significant widespread application and influence is more than a vision. In the Fall of 2017, a team of regionally located leadership development specialists, competent not only in MLDS related content, but trained in facilitating adult learning, expanded principal participation from 150 in 2016-17 to over 350 first and second year principals during the 2017-18. Additional engagement, through the rollout of Developing Level learning experiences is anticipated to move that number beyond 600 principals statewide. To fully realize the promise of this effort, more work will be necessary. Continuing steps of this process include, but are not limited to:

- Completion/Implementation of the Learning Experiences and Treatments for the following components on the MLDS Continuum
  - Developing
    - For the Developing Level, thirty-four new treatments have been created. Thirteen treatments, within the original six learning experiences, will extend the learning of the Emerging Level. Three new learning experiences: Designing and Leading Change; Communication, Influencing and Persuasion Skills; and Human Resource Leadership will add twenty-one treatments to the Developing Level content. Pilot presentations will be available to engage principals with three or more years of building level leadership during the 2017-18 school year. Full scale implementation of the first year of the Developing Level will begin during the 2018-19 school year.
  - Transformational
    - Following a design and implementation rollout, similar to the Developing Level, content design work will commence in March 2018 with statewide implementation slated for Fall 2019.

- A representative committee of administrative preparation programs has been convened to review current practice and identify ways to align degree work, system competencies, internship expectations, leadership assessments and certification requirements.

- Recognition that preparation “pipelines” are insufficient in attempting to meet the demand for capable and effective building leaders. Continuous support and development are an additional piece of the puzzle.

- Maintaining productive relationships with statewide professional associations and policy makers remains one of the hallmarks of the MLDS
  - MAESP, MASSP, MASA, RPDC personnel, IHE leaders and national consultants are at the table guiding the advancement of this critical work.

- Anchoring the language and intent of the MLDS in the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP 6) standards and indicators for governance and leadership.

- Securing sustainable resources to support MLDS implementation.
  - Utilization of funding, available under ESSA, will allow DESE to offer comprehensive leadership development and support to every principal in Missouri. Such an undertaking underscores the importance of high quality professional learning opportunities strongly allied to relevance and application.
Just as the degree of a child’s educational success should not be a product of zip code, neither should the likelihood that a capable and effective principal serves in any given building. Equitable access to meaningful educational opportunity requires the distribution of effective leadership. Traditional administrator development and support has lacked the sustainability necessary to create the environment essential to the success of all students. In Missouri, that is changing.

21st century skills… are not new, just newly important

Elena Silva

What’s new today is the degree to which economic competitiveness and educational equity mean these skills can no longer be the province of the few…

Andrew Rotherham