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# Principal Leadership at a Challenging Time: An Evaluation of the Missouri Leadership Development System

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## Executive Summary

The 2019–2020 school year marked the first year that all four levels of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) became available to participants. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is interested in learning from educators across the state about the implementation of the program, both preceding and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help DESE in this area, the Region 12 Comprehensive Center (R12CC), funded under a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, conducted this evaluation on the implementation of MLDS. The purpose of the evaluation is to support DESE in understanding current perceived impact and making evidence-based refinements to the program.

The primary purpose of MLDS is to develop and nurture effective school leaders throughout the state. MLDS supports principals at four levels, from Aspiring (pre-certificated), to Emerging (initial career entry), through Developing (practicing), and ultimately to the Transformational Principal. This evaluation examines the perceptions of participants at all four levels of MLDS.

During the timeframe of this evaluation, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic forced all Missouri districts and charter schools to close in mid-March, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the 2019–2020 school year presented school leaders, teachers, students, and parents with extensive challenges.

For this evaluation, the R12CC engaged a mixed-methods approach by collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. The multiple sources of data included: (a) statewide principal, superintendent, and specialist surveys; (b) interviews with principals, superintendents, and specialists; (c) the spring 2020 participant satisfaction survey administered by DESE; and (d) a review of documents related to MLDS and Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools (CSI) efforts.

The following questions guided the evaluation:

- » What are the overall perceptions of principals and major stakeholders on the implementation of MLDS?
- » To what extent is MLDS perceived as being implemented with fidelity, both overall and across the nine Regional Professional Development Centers in the state?
- » What are the perceptions of principals regarding MLDS professional development opportunities, and the importance of the competencies, learning experiences, and treatments, in strengthening their practice and improving student learning?
- » How do principals and major stakeholders perceive the value and impact of MLDS?
- » What factors are enhancing the implementation of MLDS and what issues are emerging, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Findings

### Overall Perceptions

- » Principals and superintendents believe that the purpose of MLDS is clear and they know where to get information about MLDS.
- » Principals and superintendents see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.
- » Principals agree that they receive support from their district or Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) when applying learnings from MLDS, and information about MLDS on a regular basis.
- » The percentage of MLDS superintendents who agree that discussions with their principal(s), relative to MLDS content, have influenced districtwide programs and practices increases by 12 percentage points, from 66% in 2019 to 78% in 2020.
- » Multiple educator groups report notably improved communication from MLDS.
- » The overall perceptions of CSI principals about MLDS are similar to the perceptions of principals at Non-CSI schools.

### Fidelity of Implementation

- » Interviewees and survey respondents believe that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity.
- » Principals agree that MLDS provides an appropriate level of support for building their leadership capacity, and that MLDS methods are helpful in developing their leadership skills.
- » Principals report that they are regularly applying what they learn from MLDS at their school.
- » Principals from all nine RPDC regions report that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools believe that MLDS is implemented with fidelity.

### Professional Development

- » Principals are highly positive about the professional development they receive from MLDS.
- » Principals agree that MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices. They believe that the professional development content and training materials are relevant to their needs as school leaders.
- » Principals and superintendents believe networking is a key and effective feature of the MLDS program.
- » Principals report that MLDS professional development strengthens their leadership practices and promotes a common leadership vocabulary in the state.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about MLDS professional development.

### Importance of MLDS Components

- » Principals, superintendents, and specialists believe that MLDS components are important for strengthening principals' leadership practices and improving student learning.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools agree that the MLDS components are important.

## Benefits and Value

- » Principals and superintendents believe that MLDS provides opportunities for professional growth, promotes peer collaboration, and strengthens instructional leadership practices.
- » Principals and superintendents agree that MLDS provides customized support to address principals' specific needs.
- » Nearly all principals believe that the program makes them better school leaders.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about the benefits and value of MLDS.

## Multiple Impacts

- » Principals and superintendents believe that MLDS improves principals' instructional leadership practices and classroom instruction.
- » Principals and superintendents agree MLDS contributes to improved student achievement.
- » Principals and superintendents believe MLDS supports the growth of school leaders in the state.
- » Principals and superintendents agree, and the state's most recent data on MLDS principal retention rates confirm, MLDS makes principals more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools report highly positive perceptions on the impacts of MLDS.

## Enhancing Factors

- » Networking and collaboration among principals is a key component making MLDS beneficial and valuable.
- » Hands-on and relevant learning experiences are a major strength of the program.
- » Consistent implementation contributes to the program's effectiveness.
- » The focus on instruction contributes to the effectiveness of MLDS.
- » The emphasis on research-based strategies helps to make the program impactful.
- » Principals are very positive about support they receive from mentors and specialists.
- » Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools have very positive perceptions about support they receive from mentors and specialists.

## Emerging Issues and COVID-19 Challenges

- » The COVID-19 pandemic introduces a new set of challenges to MLDS.
- » Principals are highly positive about the support they receive from MLDS both before and since the rise of the pandemic.
- » Principals appreciate the quick responses from MLDS to the issues emerging from the pandemic.
- » Many principals believe that they receive enhanced support from MLDS in the time of COVID-19.
- » Principals report that they continue to receive valuable assistance from their mentors and the specialists.
- » A few principals and superintendents report principals' time away from their building to participate in MLDS as a concern.

- » Many respondents hope that the groupings of principals within MLDS trainings can be further differentiated to better accommodate nuanced differences among principals and schools.
- » Some respondents believe there is room for improvement for more consistent and effective mentoring.
- » Scaling up the program makes it a challenge to provide more customized assistance to a growing number of MLDS principals.

## Recommendations

In 2020, the dominant recommendation by principals, superintendents, and specialists is to build on current program strengths and extend customized services that address emerging, pandemic-related needs. Data from both interviews and survey responses show clearly that the first year of full implementation of the program is well-received by the field, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, the following issues and recommendations focus on helping DESE to make targeted refinements to MLDS.

### Issue One: School Leadership During a Period of Uncertainty

- » Expand support to principals to address issues emerging from COVID-19.
- » Explore a hybrid of training formats.
- » Use technology to strengthen the relevance and applicability of learning activities.
- » Examine opportunities to improve technological connections for MLDS participants.
- » Keep focusing on research-based practices and strategies.

### Issue Two: Mentors and Specialists

- » Review procedures and practices related to the mentor component.
- » Continue to build the specialist team.

## Summary

In 2020, leaders and practitioners across the state indicate that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity, is effectively developing school leaders, and is moving in the right direction. They continue to believe that the program is having a highly positive impact on leadership practices, classroom instruction, and student learning.

The rise of the COVID-19 pandemic brings a high level of unknowns to the whole educational field. It adds an extra layer of complexity as well as new challenges for MLDS to keep effectively assisting principals, and for principals to continue to engage teachers and students in improving teaching and learning.

In the year ahead, by focusing on instruction and student learning, MLDS will be well-positioned to anticipate issues that may come up and to build its quick response capabilities. As new challenges emerge for principals, the program can respond in real time. Support from the program can also help school leaders across the state to lead their schools effectively during a period of uncertainty.

## Chapter One: Introduction and Context

The 2019–2020 school year marked the first year that all four levels of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) became available to participants. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is interested in learning from educators across the state about the implementation of the program, both preceding and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help DESE in this area, the Region 12 Comprehensive Center (R12CC), funded under a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, conducted this evaluation on the implementation of MLDS. The purpose of the evaluation is to support DESE in understanding current perceived impact and making evidence-based refinements to the program.

### Background of the Evaluation

#### Principal Leadership Development

The primary purpose of MLDS is “to develop and support effective school leaders” throughout the state (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b, p. 2). In fall 2014, DESE convened a group of key leaders—all engaged in principal development—to examine research and best practices for supporting school leaders. The group identified the essential competencies of a highly effective principal at each level of experience in a principal’s career.

MLDS supports principals at four levels, from Aspiring (pre-certificated), to Emerging (initial career entry), through Developing (practicing), and ultimately to the Transformational Principal. MLDS is aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders as developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.

#### The Need

According to DESE, Missouri has approximately 2,200 principals and 1,300 assistant principals, and each year approximately 1,100 educators earn an administrator certificate and 300 new principals are hired (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Recognizing the essential role effective leaders play in ensuring equitable access to excellent education for all students, DESE is focusing on developing and supporting effective school leaders in every school.

During the 2019–2020 school year, MLDS supported the professional growth of 1,080 school leaders from 839 schools in 324 LEAs.<sup>1</sup> The 1,080 participants included 592 principals (55%), 377 assistant principals (35%), and 111 other educators (10%).

#### Organizational Structure

The key components in the MLDS organizational structure include governance, design, and implementation (see Appendix A for the MLDS organizational chart).

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<sup>1</sup> Raw data were shared via email correspondences from state officials. The R12CC provided the calculations. The number of schools was identified by the number of unique school building names, and the number of LEAs by the number of unique county district codes.

**Commission.** The MLDS Commission is the governing body. The Commission establishes and executes the “processes of interaction and decision-making among the key stakeholders involved in training and supporting effective transformational principals” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019a, p.7). The Commission is comprised of 12–15 key stakeholders representing DESE, education administration programs, professional organizations, practitioners, and regional service providers. DESE chairs the Commission.

**Design.** The design teams for each level of MLDS are tasked with such duties as developing training and support materials, and preparing those who facilitate, coach, and mentor principals. They also participate in exercises and activities with other MLDS designers, and provide feedback and evaluative information to the appropriate MLDS director.

The design team identifies various engagement platforms, through which learning experiences and treatments are delivered. The engagement platforms provide opportunities for both in-person networking and virtual collaborations, including regional meetings, conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring, coaching, retreats, online events, and Twitter events.

- » *Aspiring Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators in preparing for the principalship. This preparation (pre-service) phase results in an administrative certificate. The *Aspiring Level* training became available to participants during the 2019–2020 school year.
- » *Emerging Level* participants. Their learning experiences are delivered across a two-year timeline to align with the state’s requirement that beginning school leaders be mentored for their first two years (see Appendix B for an illustration of the Emerging Level participants timeline from 2016 to 2018). The initial years of practice result in readiness for the next phase. This training became available to participants during the 2016–2017 school year.
- » *Developing Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators across a span of several years. It further develops and refines participants’ leadership skills. This training became available to participants during the 2018–2019 school year.
- » *Transformational Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators across a span of several years. This phase builds the necessary skills and knowledge of principals to lead schools in ways fully responsive to the learning needs of students. This training became available to participants during the 2019–2020 school year.

**Implementation.** The implementation teams provide direct training and support to principals, participate in exercises and activities with other implementers, and provide feedback and evaluative information to the appropriate MLDS design team and director. Mentors and specialists from the Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs),<sup>2</sup> in particular, help MLDS principals to master the leadership competencies.

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<sup>2</sup> Across the state of Missouri, there are nine RPDCs. Established by DESE, RPDCs are designed to serve the professional development needs of public school teachers and leaders. Each center, supported by MLDS specialists, differs from the others as the goal is to meet the needs of educators in each region. A district may choose to utilize services from any RPDC. The total number of MLDS specialists has increased from nine in 2016–2017 to 16 in 2019–2020. (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b; Slotnik & Liang, 2019)

MLDS provides three layers of training and support: (a) one-to-one mentoring and coaching is provided at the *Emerging* and *Developing Levels*, with additional coaching available at the *Transformational Level*; (b) regional networking with other principals is facilitated in small groups; and (c) state networking is achieved through a series of meetings where principals gather and participate in professional development together.

## About the Evaluation

This evaluation examines the perceptions of participants at all four levels of MLDS:

- » Aspiring Level
- » Emerging Level
- » Developing Level
- » Transformational Level

This report builds on the independent, formative review conducted by Slotnik and Liang (2019). At the time of data collection and analysis for the 2019 formative review, the state was beginning to roll out the *Aspiring* and *Transformational Levels* of MLDS. As such, data were only available for the *Emerging* and *Developing* levels.

## Research on Principal Leadership Development

The design and implementation of MLDS is firmly rooted in research.

Research consistently demonstrates that effective principal leadership improves student learning outcomes (Branch et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2004; Nunnery et al., 2011). Indeed, the quality of school leaders is found second only to teacher quality among school-related factors that affect student achievement (Louis et al., 2010).

In addition, studies (e.g., Clark et al., 2009) show a positive impact of principal experience on school performance, particularly related to math and student absences. As principals are more likely to leave rural schools, schools of high-poverty, and schools with a high concentration of students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), this finding suggests that principal turnover can be more impactful on these schools when experienced principals leave. Other than retirement or dismissal, Levin and Bradley (2019) find inadequate preparation and professional development is the main reason principals leave their job. Their study also shows that several elements of professional learning opportunities are positively associated with principal retention, including “high-quality preparation programs that carefully select and deeply prepare principals for challenging schools; access to in-service training, mentoring, and coaching that continue to support and develop principals; and collaboration between professional learning programs and school districts” (p. 3).

Additional studies (e.g., Jacob et al., 2015; Gates et al., 2019) show that leadership development and support programs akin to MLDS improve student learning and principal retention.

For example, Gates and colleagues (2019) examines the impact of a *Principal Pipeline Initiative* implemented in six large urban school districts from 2011 to 2016. Their analyses show a positive impact of the initiative on improving both student achievement and principal retention. After three or more years, schools with newly placed principals in the treatment districts outperform comparison schools by 6.22 percentile points in reading and 2.87 percentile points in math. Also, newly placed principals in the treatment districts are 5.8 percentage points more likely to remain in their school for at least two years and 7.8 percentage points more likely to remain in their school for at least three years than newly placed principals in comparison schools. The effects of the initiative on student achievement are positive and statistically significant for schools in the lowest quartile of the achievement distribution and larger than schools in the second-lowest quartile.

Gates and colleagues (2019) also indicate that the entire package of *Principal Pipeline Initiative* components appears to work as a cohesive whole. The four aligned components of the initiative include: (a) rigorous leader standards, or principal job descriptions, of practice and performance that guide principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support; (b) high-quality preservice preparation for high-potential candidates, typically through a combination of in-district programs and partnerships with university preparation programs; (c) data-informed hiring and placement, based on candidates' demonstrated skills, to selectively hire and match principal candidates to schools; and (d) well-aligned on-the-job support and evaluation, serving to help principals, especially novices, hone their skills, particularly in bolstering instructional leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2019).

## COVID-19

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic presented school leaders, teachers, students, and parents with extensive challenges during the 2019–2020 school year. The coronavirus forced all Missouri districts and charter schools to close mid-March, 2020. DESE applied to the United States Department of Education for a waiver of required assessments, including the Missouri Assessment Program's End-of-Course, Grade-Level and Alternate assessments. DESE received final approval of this waiver on March 30, 2020 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020a).

One key challenge that many school leaders immediately faced with school closures was that one in five Missouri students could not access online learning opportunities due to Wi-Fi availability and/or affordability. Utilizing the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund, DESE reimbursed schools for costs associated with increasing student connectivity and expanding campus Wi-Fi networks. In addition, DESE supported school leaders across the state by (a) providing additional student devices; (b) creating a formative assessment tool to gauge the level of learning loss/growth and to develop instructional strategies; (c) reimbursing schools for transportation expenses incurred when delivering meals to students during school closures; and (d) covering the costs of personal protective equipment and cleaning and medical supplies (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020b).

## Overview of the Report

The remainder of the report is organized as follows. Chapter Two presents the evaluation methodology. Chapters Three through Ten discuss the findings of the study, including overall perceptions (Chapter Three), fidelity of implementation (Chapter Four), professional development (Chapter Five), importance of MLDS components (Chapter Six), benefits and value (Chapter Seven), multiple impacts (Chapter Eight), enhancing factors (Chapter Nine), and emerging issues and COVID-19 challenges (Chapter Ten). Chapter Eleven discusses key issues and presents recommendations.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

For this evaluation, the R12CC engaged a mixed-methods approach by collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. The multiple sources of data included: (a) statewide principal, superintendent, and specialist surveys; (b) interviews with principals, superintendents, and specialists; (c) spring 2020 participant satisfaction survey administered by DESE; and (d) a review of documents related to MLDS and Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools (CSI) efforts.

The following questions guided the evaluation:

- » What are the overall perceptions of principals and major stakeholders on the implementation of MLDS?
- » To what extent is MLDS perceived as being implemented with fidelity, both overall and across the nine RPDCs in the state?
- » What are the perceptions of principals regarding the MLDS professional development opportunities, and the importance of the competencies, learning experiences, and treatments, in strengthening their practice and improving student learning?
- » How do principals and major stakeholders perceive the value and impact of MLDS?
- » What factors are enhancing the implementation of MLDS and what issues are emerging, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic?

### Data Collection

#### Principal, Superintendent, and Specialist Surveys

In partnership with DESE, the R12CC developed and administered three web-based, anonymous surveys for principals, superintendents, and specialists across the state. The surveys were launched on June 18, 2020, using an independent platform. The R12CC sent the survey links to DESE and DESE forwarded the survey links to all principals, superintendents and specialists. The principal and superintendent associations and some MLDS specialists helped to disseminate information about the surveys. The R12CC provided DESE with daily updates on survey participation. Multiple reminders were sent to maximize the number of responses. The surveys were closed on August 7, 2020.

The principal survey branched respondents to two sets of questions, based upon their MLDS program involvement. Respondents who are currently in the program or have previously participated in MLDS were asked a series of Likert-scale questions focusing on: overall perceptions; fidelity of implementation; professional development; importance of components; benefits and value; and perceived impacts.

In addition, respondents were provided with six open-ended questions so they could comment on:

- » The parts of MLDS that they consider to be unique
- » The parts of MLDS that are making the program effective
- » The parts of MLDS that are impeding its effectiveness
- » Changes of supports from MLDS during the COVID-19 period (March 2020–June 2020)
- » Going forward, how supports from MLDS should change in the era of COVID-19
- » Recommendations for improving MLDS

For those principals who have not participated in MLDS, the survey questions focused on their knowledge of MLDS and the value and impact of high-quality leadership development and support. They were also invited to share their perspectives on the change of supports for school leaders during the COVID-19 period (March 2020–June 2020) and recommendations on changes of supports for school leaders in the era of COVID-19.

The superintendent survey also used a branching function based on whether the respondent’s district has principal(s) involved in MLDS. Questions for MLDS superintendents focused on: overall perceptions; benefits and value; and impact. Four open-ended questions requested superintendent’s perceptions about enhancing factors, impeding factors, changes of supports from MLDS for school leaders during the COVID-19 period (March 2020–June 2020) and going forward, how MLDS leadership supports should change to better serve school leaders in the era of COVID-19.

For Non-MLDS superintendents, the questions centered on: general beliefs; and the value and impact of high quality leadership development and support. Two open-ended questions asked for their perceptions on the changes of supports for school leaders during the COVID-19 period (March 2020–June 2020) and recommendations for changes of supports for school leaders in the era of COVID-19.

The specialist survey included a similar set of Likert-scale and open-ended questions as the MLDS participant survey, with some wording adjustments as appropriate. All specialists surveyed are those who provide training and support for the MLDS program.

Table 1 shows the response rates on the three surveys.

**Table 1. Response Rates for the Principal, Superintendent, and Specialist Surveys**

Surveys and Respondents	Population	Number of Responses	MLDS Response Rate	Non MLDS Response Rate
<b>Principal Survey</b>				
MLDS Principals <i>Aspiring Level (Current)</i> <i>Emerging Level (Current)</i> <i>Developing Level (Current)</i> <i>Transformational Level (Current)</i> <i>Previous Participants</i>	1,080	183	16.9%	
Non-MLDS Principals	1,608	43		2.7%
<b>Superintendent Survey</b>				
MLDS Superintendents	324	61	18.8%	
Non-MLDS Superintendents	235	43		18.3%
<b>Specialist Survey</b>				
Specialists	16	8	50.0%	

*Note.* Responses to survey questions were not required, therefore total numbers of respondents may vary throughout this report. A total of 11 Central Office Administrators also responded to the superintendent survey, however their responses are not part of this evaluation.

The responses of participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels were very positive and similar. The responses of principals at the Transformational level were even more positive than the other three groups. As there were only a small number of respondents at the Aspiring level (n = 7) and at the Transformational level (n = 15), the responses of participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, Developing, and Transformational levels were grouped together. Appendix C provides the responses of previous participants.

In discussions of the survey responses that follow, unless otherwise noted, “principals” refer to current MLDS participants at all four levels (i.e., Aspiring, Emerging, Developing, and Transformational), and “superintendents” refer to MLDS superintendents.<sup>3</sup>

The survey analyses included cross tabulations and figures to display the findings. It reported (a) the perceptions of principals at all four levels in 2020, (b) the perceptions of principals at the Emerging and Developing levels and superintendents in 2019 and 2020,<sup>4</sup> and (c) the perceptions of principals at CSI and Non-CSI schools in 2020.

To examine the statistical significance of differences across groups, the R12CC conducted Mann-Whitney U tests, a preferred approach over T-tests when the distribution of the responses is skewed (De Winter & Dodou, 2010).

For the written comments, the R12CC conducted thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes and key issues across survey respondents.

## Interviews

The R12CC developed three protocols for interviews with principals, superintendents, and specialists. The protocols were tailored as appropriate to the role of the interviewees and included questions on their perceptions of the fidelity of MLDS implementation, professional development, and the perceived impact of MLDS on principals’ leadership practices, classroom instruction, and student learning. Interviewees were also asked about their perceptions of supports from MLDS in the time of COVID-19, factors that they believe enhance or impede the implementation of MLDS, and their recommendations for further improving the program.

In each RPDC region, the R12CC identified four principals at different MLDS levels (i.e., 36 in total) and three superintendents (i.e., 27 in total) for interviews. Due to the unexpected challenges brought by the coronavirus to the field, the R12CC ended up successfully conducting 44 interviews.

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix C provides the responses of previous MLDS participants. Appendix D reports the perceptions of non-MLDS principals, and Appendix E of non-MLDS superintendents. Responses from specialists are not reported separately due to the small numbers of respondents (N=8). Overall, specialists (88–100%) agree with almost all the survey items. Central office administrator responses are not included in this report. The R12CC also reviewed the results of the spring 2020 participant satisfaction survey administered by DESE and found that the findings are highly consistent with those of this report.

<sup>4</sup> The training opportunities for participants at the Aspiring and Transformational levels became available during the 2019–2020 school year (Slotnik & Liang, 2019). Therefore, perceptual data for Slotnik and Liang (2019) were only available for the participants at the Emerging and Developing levels.

As Table 2 shows, the R12CC interviewed 13 superintendents (including nine MLDS superintendents), 20 principals (including 15 MLDS principals), and 11 specialists. Of the nine superintendents who have principal(s) involved in MLDS, three have schools identified as CSI school(s). Of the 15 MLDS principals, seven are leading CSI schools.

*Table 2. Number of Interviewees by Position (N = 44)*

	Involved in MLDS	Not Involved in MLDS	Total Interviewees
Superintendents	9	4	<b>13</b>
Principals	15	5	<b>20</b>
Specialists	11	0	<b>11</b>
<b>Total Interviewees</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>44</b>

For the interview data, the R12CC conducted thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes and key issues across interviewee groups.

### Participant Satisfaction Survey (Spring 2020)

The R12CC examined participants' responses to the satisfaction survey which DESE administered in spring 2020.

### Documents Review

The R12CC reviewed documents relating to MLDS and CSI. Representative examples include:

- » MLDS Aspiring Level Participant Guide (October, 2019)
- » MLDS Emerging Level Participant Guide (August, 2016)
- » MLDS Developing Level Participant Guide (September, 2017)
- » MLDS Transformational Level Participant Guide (December, 2018)
- » MLDS Executive Summary (October, 2019)
- » CSI training document

### Limitations of the Evaluation

Before discussing the findings and implications, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the evaluation. This study is based on perceptual data regarding the implementation and impact of MLDS. Quantitative data are not yet available to determine the long-term impact of the program on principals' leadership practices, school leader retention, or student achievement. In addition, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, after multiple rounds of outreach efforts, the level of survey participation was lower than that of 2019, and the number of interviews conducted was smaller than what was planned. Furthermore, the number of respondents who were leading CSI schools is small. Findings on CSI school leaders' perceptions are therefore more formative than definitive.

Despite these limitations, consistent findings and trends on MLDS emerge from the surveys and interviews. Together, they draw a clear picture of the implementation of the program. These important findings aid DESE to make evidence-based refinements and continue to support the growth of school leaders across the state.

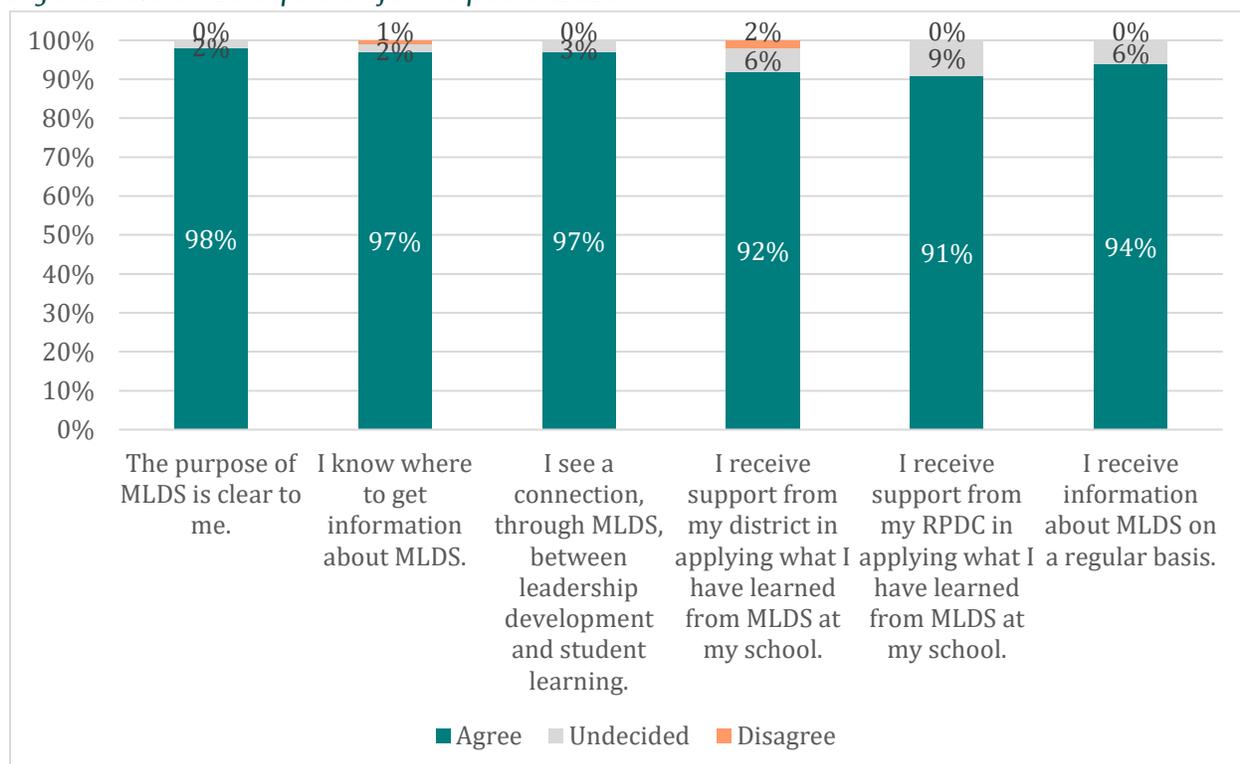
## Chapter Three: Overall Perceptions

This chapter examines the overall perceptions' of MLDS survey respondents and interviewees.

### Perceptions of MLDS Participants in 2020

As Figure 1 shows, **principals believe that the purpose of MLDS is clear and they know where to get information about MLDS.** Almost all principals agree that the purpose of MLDS is clear (98%) and they know where to get information about MLDS (97%).

Figure 1. Overall Perceptions of Principals in 2020



Note. Throughout this report, unless otherwise noted, agree is a composite of strongly agree/agree, and disagree is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. Due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to precisely 100%.

Interviewees also report that the expectations of the program are clear.

*Expectations are clear. They push me to think about how to make improvements...They have me reflect on my decisions.*

-Principal

Figure 1 also shows that **principals see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.** Interviewees elaborate on this connection.

*MLDS provided the framework and background knowledge for what I am trying to accomplish in my building. For example, with the coaching and the feedback I could come back and immediately apply. It was all very applicable.*

-Principal

*The principals in the district are young administrators. The program will help them grow in their leadership roles as they address the needs of their students by being instructional leaders to the teachers.*

-Superintendent

In addition, more than 90% of **principals agree that they receive support from their district or RPDC when applying learnings from MLDS, and information about MLDS on a regular basis.** Just 6–9% of principals are either undecided or disagree that they receive such support or information on a regular basis.

*The coaching/learning labs provide modeling and effective practices in improving instruction. The RPDC meetings provide networking and problem-solving opportunities among principals, as well as strategies for improving instruction in teachers.*

-Principal

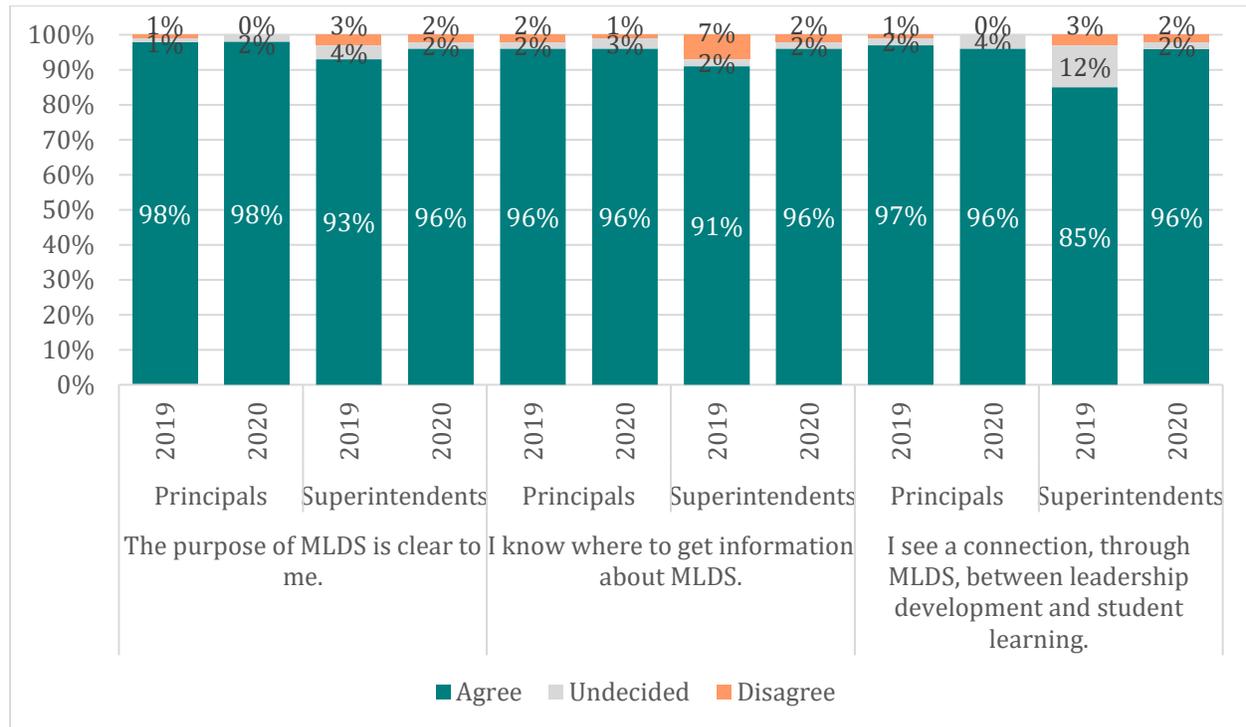
*I believe the directors at the RPDC do a fantastic job of utilizing quality administrators and providing us with quality learning opportunities that can be taken back to our districts.*

-Principal

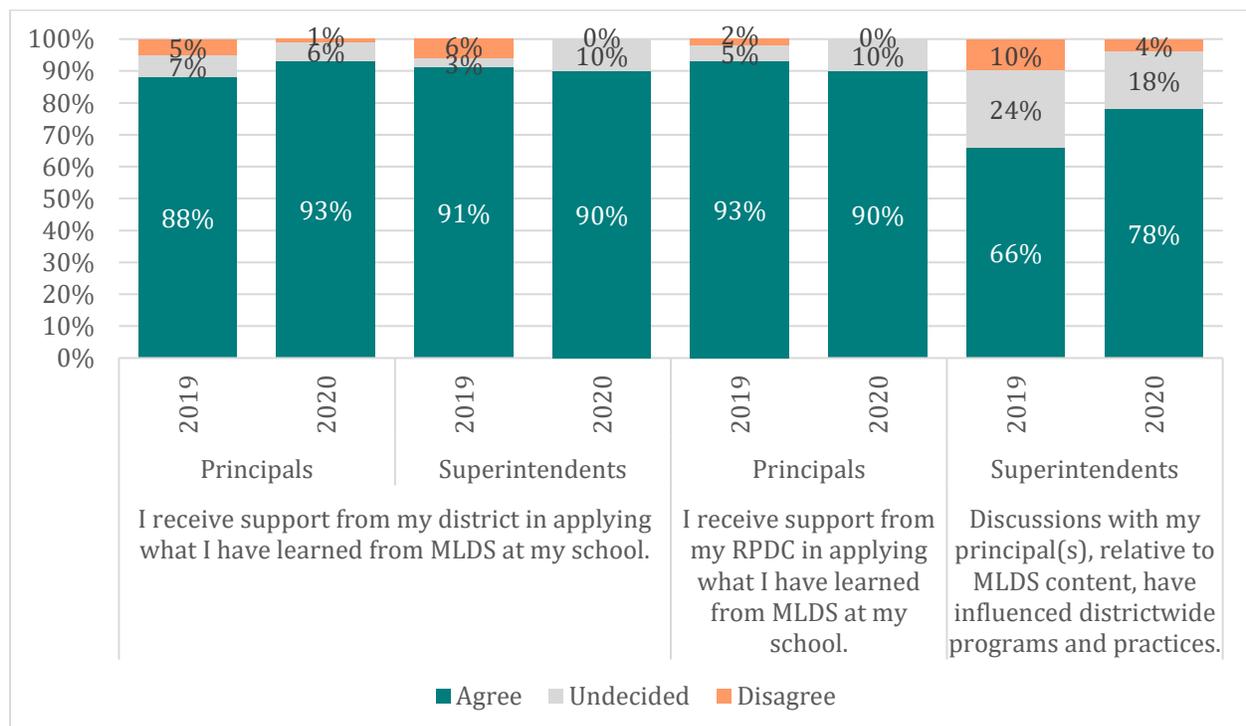
## Perceptions of Respondents in 2019 and 2020

As Figure 2 shows, 96% or more of **principals at the Emerging and Developing Levels in both 2019 and 2020 believe that the purpose of MLDS is clear, they know where to get information about MLDS, and they see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning. More than eight out of ten superintendents also agree.** In particular, the percentage of superintendents who see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership and student learning increases by 11 percentage points, from 85% in 2019 to 96% in 2020.

**Figure 2. Overall Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels and Superintendents in 2019 and 2020**



**Figure 3. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels and Superintendents in 2019 and 2020**



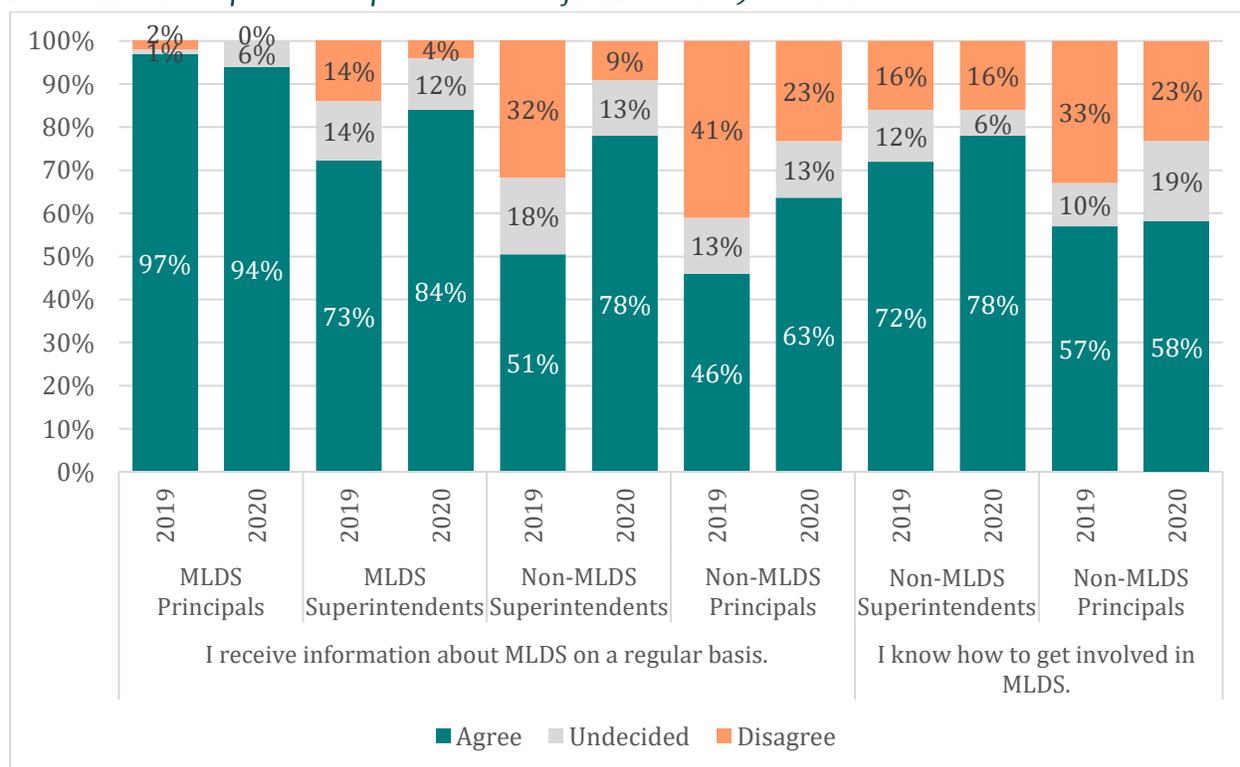
*Note.* For “I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school,” the survey question for superintendents was “My principal(s) receive support from my district in applying what they have learned from MLDS at their school.”

Figure 3 shows that 88% or more of **principals at the Emerging and Developing levels in both 2019 and 2020 believe that they receive support from their district or RPDC when applying learnings from MLDS.**

Notably, **the percentage of MLDS superintendents who agree that discussions with their principal(s), relative to MLDS content, have influenced districtwide programs and practices increases by 12 percentage points, from 66% in 2019 to 78% in 2020.** The overall survey response in 2020 is 25 percentage points higher than the response in DESE’s 2017–18 satisfaction survey in which 53% of superintendents indicated that their discussions with their principals, relative to MLDS content had significant or moderate influences on districtwide programs and practices (Slotnik & Liang, 2019).

**Multiple educator groups report notably improved communication from MLDS.** As Figure 4 shows, nearly all MLDS principals at the Emerging and Developing levels (97% in 2019 and 94% in 2020) agree that they receive information about the program on a regular basis, and the percentage of MLDS superintendents who believe so increases by 11 percentage points from 73% in 2019 to 84% in 2020.

*Figure 4. Overall Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels, Superintendents, and Non-MLDS Principals and Superintendents of MLDS in 2019 and 2020*



Similar improvements in communication are reported by Non-MLDS superintendents and principals. In 2019, only half of the Non-MLDS superintendents (51%) and principals (46%) agree that they receive such information regularly. In 2020, 78% of Non-MLDS superintendents (a 27 percentage point increase) and 63% of Non-MLDS principals (a 17 percentage point increase) believe so.

In both years, three-fourths (72–78%) of Non-MLDS superintendents and more than half (57–58%) of Non-MLDS principals believe they know how to get involved in MLDS.

## Perceptions of MLDS Participants by CSI School Status

Table 3 suggests that **the overall perceptions of CSI principals about MLDS are similar to the principals at Non-CSI schools.** Consistently, more than nine out of ten principals leading CSI schools agree with the survey items. Compared to principals at Non-CSI schools (88%), principals at CSI schools (100%) agree to a greater extent that they receive support from their RPDC when applying learnings from MLDS.

*Table 3. Overall Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status in 2020*

	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
The purpose of MLDS is clear to me.	13	100%	0%	0%	100	98%	2%	0%
I know where to get information about MLDS.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	97%	2%	1%
I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	93%	7%	0%
I see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	97%	3%	0%
I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.	13	92%	0%	8%	101	92%	7%	1%
I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	88%	12%	0%

*Note.* Throughout this report, unless otherwise noted, N = Number of respondents. A = Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Summary

In both 2019 and 2020, principals and superintendents have very positive perceptions of MLDS. They believe that the purpose of MLDS is clear, and they know where to get information about the program. Through MLDS, they see a connection between leadership development and student learning. Principals also report that they receive support from both their district and RPDC.

From 2019 to 2020, a higher percentage of superintendents agree that discussions with their principal(s), relative to MLDS content, influence districtwide programs and practices. Also, communication improved significantly across multiple educator groups.

Data suggests that in 2020, the overall perceptions of principals at CSI schools are similar to those at Non-CSI schools.

## Chapter Four: Fidelity of Implementation

This chapter examines respondents' perceptions of the fidelity of MLDS implementation. It focuses on *Participant Responsiveness* and *Program Differentiation* (e.g., Dane & Schneider, 1998, as cited in U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2015), two dimensions of fidelity that can be adequately captured with survey and interview data. This chapter also explores whether the perceived fidelity of MLDS implementation is consistent across the nine RPDC regions as well as CSI and Non-CSI schools.

*Participant Responsiveness* refers to the extent to which participants react to or engage in the program (e.g., their perceptions about the relevance, appropriateness, and helpfulness of MLDS, and their level of engagement). *Program Differentiation* refers to the degree that the critical components of the program are distinguishable from each other and from other programs.

### Participant Responsiveness in 2020

Implementing MLDS with fidelity is DESE's intent (Slotnik & Liang, 2019). **Interviewees and survey respondents believe that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity.**

*I believe MLDS delivers the components [as designed] because they have good people in charge and know what they are doing from a practitioners' basis rather than theory.*

-Superintendent

*Statewide fidelity is one of our anchor beliefs of a statewide team. On a one to ten we are a 9 to deliver as designed.*

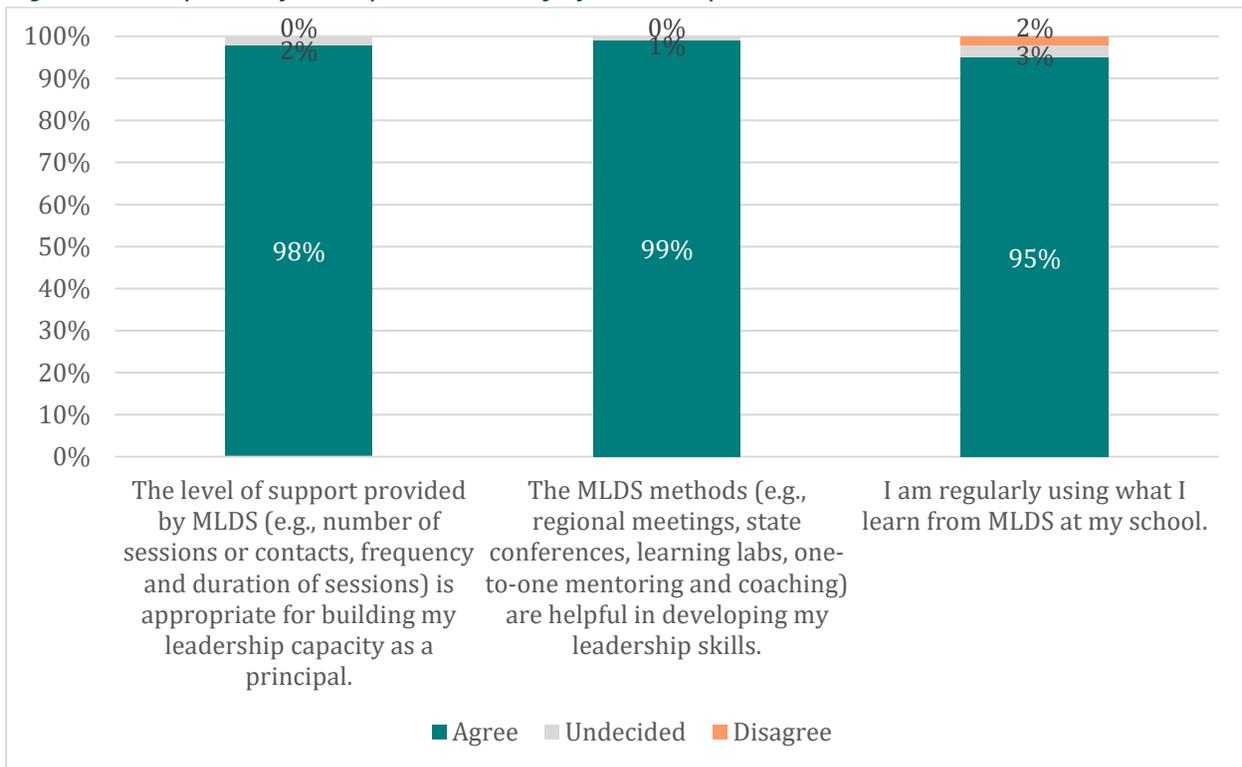
-Specialist

*I am a big believer in implementing with fidelity. Our team has made a pact; we are delivering it as written. I am a believer in our work and our models for delivery. I believe it is what we have to do to keep consistency across the state. We don't want someone to switch regions and not have the same experience. I believe we do a highly effective job of delivering our content with fidelity.*

-Specialist

As Figure 5 shows, 98% or more of **principals agree that MLDS provides an appropriate level of support for building their leadership capacity, and that the MLDS methods are helpful in developing their leadership skills.**

Figure 5. Perceptions of Principals on Fidelity of MLDS Implementation in 2020



Principals elaborate on their positive perceptions in interviews and survey comments.

*The learning and then application makes MLDS effective. Plus, it is run by local educators, who understand our market and challenges.*

-Principal

*There weren't any experiences I think were a waste of my time. Everything was appropriate that we were asked to do. I thought about the building at times, but it was beneficial every time I went.*

-Principal

Principals are expected to apply what they learn from the MLDS trainings to their real-life leadership practices (Slotnik & Liang, 2019). Figure 5 shows that a dominant majority (95%) of **principals report that they are regularly applying what they learn from MLDS at their school.** Interviewees and survey respondents reinforce this result.

*There has never been a time that I did not come away with something to come back to my school and apply.*

-Principal

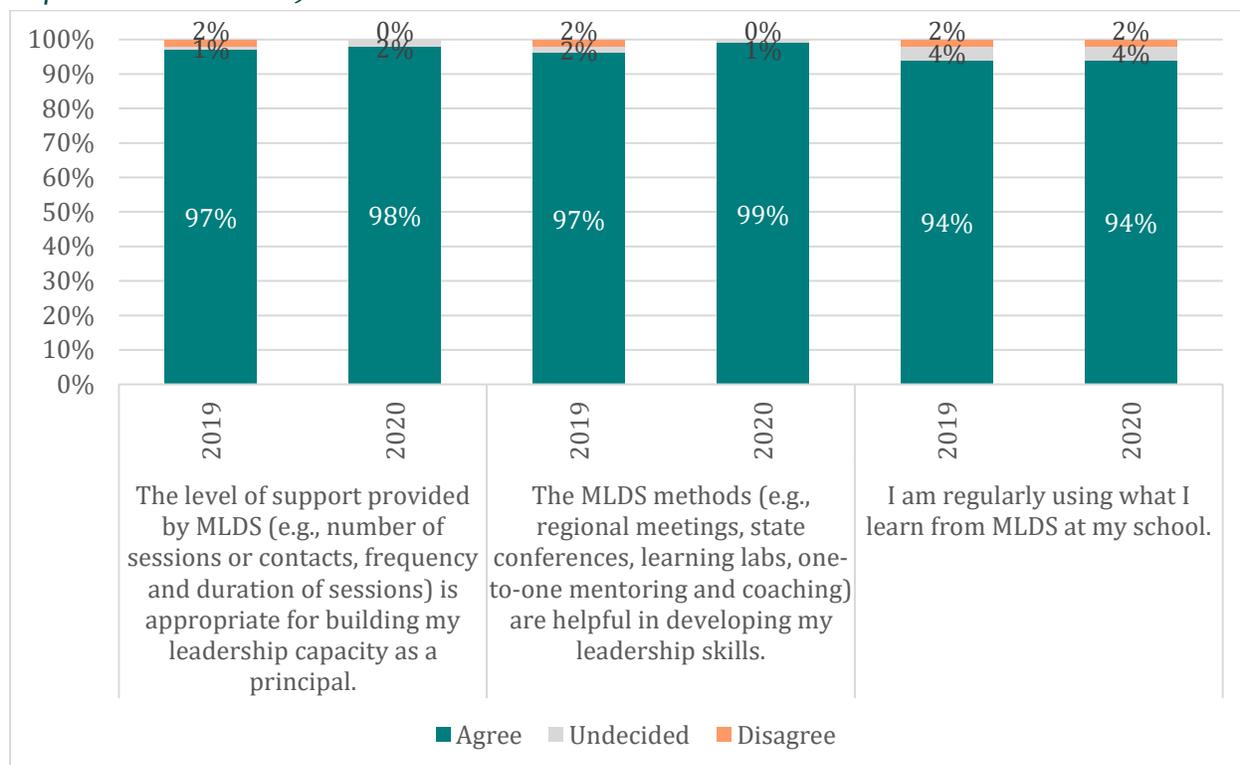
*We can immediately apply what we learn through MLDS to our buildings.*

-Principal

## Participant Responsiveness in 2019 and 2020

Figure 6 shows that **in both 2019 and 2020, principals at the Emerging and Developing levels are consistently highly positive about the fidelity of MLDS implementation.** In both years, 94% or more of principals agree that MLDS provides an appropriate level of support, the MLDS methods are helpful, and they apply what they learn from MLDS at their school.

**Figure 6. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Fidelity of MLDS Implementation in 2019 and 2020**



## Fidelity of Implementation Across the Regions in 2020

**Principals from all nine RPDC regions report that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity.**

In this context, statistical analyses show that the perceptions of principals in the South Central region differ somewhat from those in the other eight RPDC regions. Therefore, principals from the South Central region form one group, and principals from the other RPDC regions form the other group. As Table 4 shows, the responses of both groups of principals are highly positive, and the responses of principals in the South Central region are even more positive.

**Table 4. Perceived Fidelity of MLDS Implementation Across RPDC Regions in 2020**

	South Central				Other 8 RPDC Regions			
	N	SA	A	U	N	SA	A	U
The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal. *	31	81%	19%	0%	96	59%	39%	2%
The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills. *	31	94%	6%	0%	96	57%	42%	1%
I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school. *	31	77%	23%	0%	96	51%	43%	4%

*Note.* \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. As the percentages of MLDS participants who disagree or strongly disagree with the survey questions were so small, the table shows only the percentages of MLDS participants who strongly agree (SA), agree (A), and are undecided (U) about the survey items.

Table 5 presents the responses from five survey items that help to explain the responses from the two groupings of principals. Although principals from all nine regions are highly positive about MLDS, higher percentages of principals from South Central than their peers from the other regions strongly agree that the purpose of MLDS is clear (97% vs. 59%), they know where to get information (90% vs. 63%), and they receive information regularly (94% vs. 67%). These principals also strongly agree that they receive support from their RPDCs in applying what they learn from MLDS at their school (87% vs. 55%), and that MLDS provides customized support to address their specific needs (77% vs. 59%).

**Table 5. Perceptions of Principals Across RPDC Regions in 2020**

	South Central				Other 8 RPDC Regions			
	N	SA	A	U	N	SA	A	U
The purpose of MLDS is clear to me. *	31	97%	3%	0%	95	59%	39%	2%
I know where to get information about MLDS. *	31	90%	10%	0%	96	63%	33%	3%
I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis. *	31	94%	3%	3%	96	67%	27%	6%
I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school. *	31	87%	13%	0%	96	55%	32%	13%
I believe MLDS provides customized support to address my specific needs.	31	77%	16%	6%	96	59%	31%	8%

*Note.* \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. As the percentages of MLDS participants who disagree or strongly disagree with the survey questions were so small, the table shows only the percentages of MLDS participants who strongly agree (SA), agree (A), and are undecided (U) about the survey items.

## Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Fidelity of MLDS Implementation

Table 6 shows that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools believe that MLDS is implemented with fidelity**. All principals at CSI schools agree that MLDS provides an appropriate level of support for building their leadership capacity, and that the MLDS methods are helpful in developing their leadership skills. They also report that they are regularly applying what they learn from MLDS at their school.

*Table 6. Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Fidelity of MLDS Implementation in 2020*

	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	98%	2%	0%
The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	99%	1%	0%
I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	94%	4%	2%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Program Differentiation

In interviews and the survey, principals and specialists highlight a range of features (e.g., networking, coaching labs, small group collaboration, team visits) that they believe make MLDS unique.

*I like that we get to develop a network with principals on the same career trajectory in different districts. The MLDS training is unique and impossible to find anywhere else. Also, we get to put theory into practice by performing walk throughs with our group regularly and discussing feedback for teachers.*

-Principal

*The coaching labs are very unique and extremely helpful.*

-Principal

*[The parts of MLDS I consider unique include] engaging learning experiences, highly relevant content and experiences, triad of support: mentoring, MLDS specialists, state organizations, Missouri's statewide system of support structure...regional reach.*

-Specialist

These unique characteristics, individually and collectively, are perceived to make MLDS effective and impactful.

*This [MLDS] is effective because new administrators are working with administrators that have experience!! The knowledge shared and gained from this is excellent.*

-Superintendent

*It [Participation in MLDS] was very impactful. I don't know that I would have survived the last two years without it. I had people to network with, people to turn to for my next step, etc. It was a life-saver for me.*

-Principal

*It [Participation in MLDS] gives me a support system that I would not have otherwise and that is the most impactful important thing I get from it. I have people who are in the mix with me. It's been a valuable experience for me.*

-Principal

## Summary

Principals across the RPDC regions and across CSI and Non-CSI schools agree that MLDS is implemented with fidelity. Interviewees and survey respondents report that the MLDS has many unique features which make the program effective and impactful.

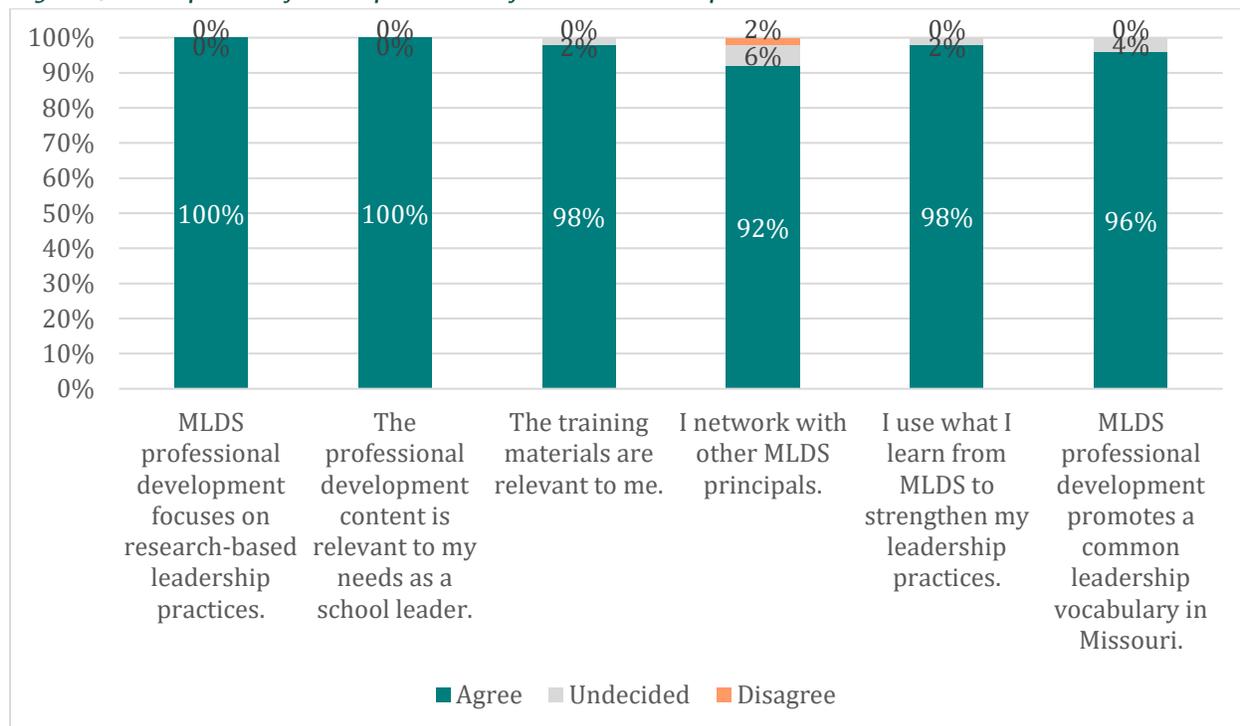
## Chapter Five: Professional Development

This chapter explores the perceptions of principals and superintendents on the MLDS professional development.

### Perceptions on MLDS Professional Development in 2020

Figure 7 shows that **principals are highly positive about the professional development that they receive from MLDS**. In 2020, consistently more than nine out of ten principals agree with the survey prompts related to MLDS professional development.

Figure 7. Perceptions of Principals on Professional Development in 2020



More specifically, **all principals agree that the MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices**. In addition, **nearly all principals believe that the professional development content and training materials are relevant to their needs as school leaders**.

*The research-based content that we learn is priceless. It is as though we are in a full training, but with a small group and the ability to work through the material in real time.*

-Principal

*I think the training materials are good for me. Being new, it is something we can relate to in our everyday job. Good training materials. Yeah, I think I've learned a lot. There is something I can take back to my school and try to implement.*

-Principal

*[The training materials are] Always high quality and always visually aesthetically pleasing and very organized. When I have to fill out logs at the end of the year, I could easily track what I had learned. I liked that they always had things to send us home with. Every aspect of MLDS plays a separate role and each is valuable.*

-Principal

Superintendents also report that the MLDS professional development is of high quality. The trainings focus on instruction, are based on research, and the materials are relevant.

*I had some brand new principals at the elementary level. They all were involved...and I talked with two of them the other day...They stated this was the best professional development they had ever had in their entire professional life.*

-Superintendent

*[The parts of MLDS that are making it effective include] The utilization of research based skills, techniques, approaches, processes, etc.*

-Superintendent

*The quality of the training materials is very good. The relevance is very good...I think they will be very effective in developing my principal with more time.*

-Superintendent

Figure 7 and comments by interviewees indicate that **networking is a key and effective feature of the MLDS program.**

*Networking with other administrators is critical to success.*

-Superintendent

*I know they [MLDS principals] are networking with other principals outside of our district. I appreciate that because they do need that outside perspective. It doesn't just need to be what we're doing. It's also an opportunity to visit other schools, and in that respect it's helpful.*

-Superintendent

*This has been a good program for me. The networking was huge and very diverse and gave me time to reflect and learn about the principal's role. The principal has a lonely job so knowing that you are not alone helped. Maybe some of my issues were not so big after listening to my peers.*

-Principal

*The networking opportunities and open dialogue have encouraged building strong professional relationships. I highly value the MLDS program and would encourage any administrator (new or veteran) to participate.*

-Principal

As Figure 7 shows, **principals report that MLDS professional development strengthens their leadership practices and promotes a common leadership vocabulary in the state.** Nearly all principals agree that they use what they learn from MLDS to strengthen their leadership practices (98%), and that MLDS trainings promote a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri (96%).

*The real-life experiences provided through the coaching labs have been extremely useful in increasing my effectiveness as a school leader.*

-Principal

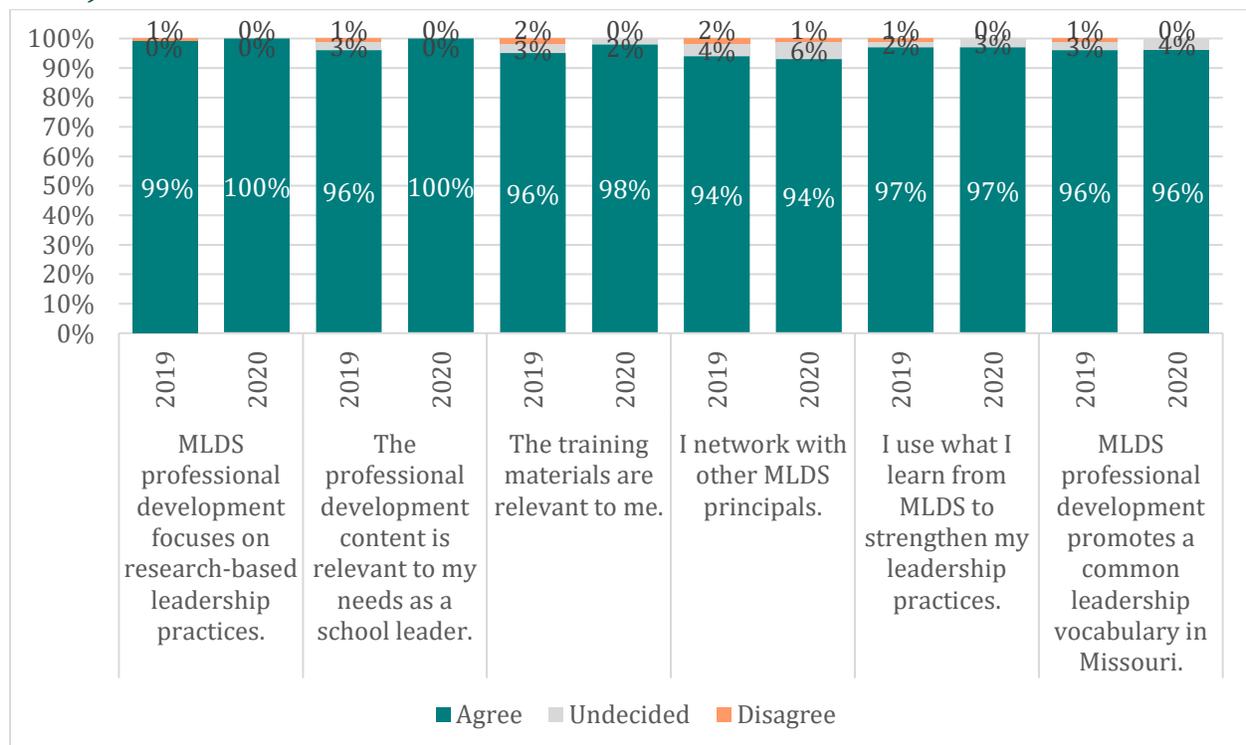
*The ideas that we get from the start of our day until we leave can be taken back to the building level! I feel like I am always walking away with new insights.*

-Principal

## Perceptions on MLDS Professional Development in 2019 and 2020

Figure 8 shows that **in both 2019 and 2020, principals at the Emerging and Developing levels are consistently very positive about the professional development that they receive from MLDS.** Across the two years, 94% or more of principals agree that MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices, and the training content and materials are relevant to their needs. They also agree that they network with other MLDS principals and use what they learn from MLDS to strengthen their leadership practices. They believe MLDS trainings promote a common leadership vocabulary across the state.

**Figure 8. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Professional Development in 2019 and 2020**



## Perceptions of MLDS Participants by CSI School Status

Table 7 suggests that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about MLDS professional development**. All principals at the CSI schools agree that MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices, the content is relevant to their needs, and the training materials are relevant. They also all agree that they network with other MLDS principals and use what they learn from MLDS to strengthen their leadership practices. They believe that MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in the state.

*Table 7. Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Professional Development in 2020*

	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	100%	0%	0%
The professional development content is relevant to my needs as a school leader.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	100%	0%	0%
The training materials are relevant to me.	13	100%	0%	0%	100	98%	2%	0%
I use what I learn from MLDS to strengthen my leadership practices.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	97%	3%	0%
I network with other MLDS principals.	13	92%	8%	0%	100	92%	6%	2%
MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	95%	5%	0%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Summary

In 2019 and 2020, both principals and superintendents are very positive about the MLDS professional development. They believe that MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices, and the content and training materials are of high quality and relevant to the needs of school leaders. They agree that MLDS trainings provide networking opportunities among participants, strengthen participants’ leadership practices, and promote a common leadership vocabulary across the state.

Principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about the professional development that they receive from MLDS.

## Chapter Six: Importance of MLDS Components

This chapter examines the perceptions of principals, superintendents, and specialists on the importance of the MLDS components.

According to the participant guides (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019a), MLDS focuses on 32 essential competencies of a transformational principal, embedded in learning experiences for every program level. Each learning experience includes a number of treatments—specific activities and approaches—designed to foster mastery of the competencies. Collectively, these competencies, learning experiences, and treatments are referred to as MLDS components in this report.

### Perceived Importance of MLDS Components in 2020

Table 8 and interview data show that in 2020, **principals, superintendents and specialists believe that MLDS components are important for strengthening principals' leadership practices and improving student learning.** Consistently more than half of principals rate the competencies (54%), learning experiences (85%), and treatments (57%) as very important. Three-fourths or more of specialists also agree that the MLDS components are very important (75%, 100%, 100%, respectively).

*Table 8. Perceived Importance of MLDS Components in 2020*

Component	Educator Group	N	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices?							
Competencies	Principals	127	54%	35%	9%	1%	0%
	Specialists	8	75%	13%	13%	0%	0%
Learning Experiences	Principals	127	85%	10%	5%	0%	0%
	Specialists	8	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Treatments	Principals	127	57%	35%	8%	1%	0%
	Specialists	8	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

### Competencies

Principals and specialists emphasize the pivotal role that the MLDS competencies play. They believe that the competencies are applicable, impactful, and foundational.

*I feel most of them [the MLDS competencies] are very applicable and useful to me. They help direct the focus so I can come back and help move my building forward and interact with staff, students, and families.*

-Principal

*I think they help us in every aspect of what we need to do in the day. They help us to be better leaders, instructional leaders, it starts with us and the competencies help us become better leaders.*

-Principal

*We have developed and delivered the competencies from the time they are learning to be a principal, to year 3 or 4, all the way to a high level leader. We built our learning experiences and our treatments on those competencies. Everything is based on something we believe that they need to know. Not only do we talk about them, but their mentors talk about them in each site visit. It is our foundation, competencies.*

-Specialist

## Learning Experiences

Similar to their perceptions of the competencies, principals and specialists believe that the learning experiences are helpful and effective.

*I found the overall learning experiences of the coaching lab (prep, apply, and discuss) to be helpful, and really improved the way I provided feedback to teachers.*

-Principal

*[The MLDS learning experiences are] Very effective. Especially the teacher feedback...We went into the classroom, made observations, gave feedback and then we talked about it. We practiced what we learned immediately after learning. During the RPDC meetings, we learned, reflected, interacted with others, and did a lot of reflection...That was really valuable.*

-Principal

*They [The MLDS learning experiences] are huge and we use them day to day with our principals. They keep us aligned and are well written. They are tied directly to competencies. The Learning Experiences make all the difference.*

-Specialist

## Treatments

As with the competencies and learning experiences, principals and specialists believe that the MLDS treatments are effective and impactful. They promote meaningful conversations and provide opportunities for collaboration and networking among participants.

*The coaching opportunities and treatments have been extremely effective.*

-Principal

*I thought they [the MLDS treatments] were all very good. They led to strong conversations and applications for when you're back in the building.*

-Principal

*The activities with treatments are what help us to connect with our principals by collaborating between participants and implementing them in their buildings.*

-Specialist

In interviews, superintendents shared their perspectives on the importance and effectiveness of the MLDS competencies, learning experiences, and treatments in supporting principals’ strengthening their leadership practices and improving student learning. Many superintendent interviewees believe that the MLDS components are important and support principals’ growth into instructional leaders.

*I see during my walk through principals in classrooms, using the learning experiences and treatments in their work. Principals are becoming instructional leaders. It [MLDS] has helped immensely.*

-Superintendent

*These competencies are well-vetted by DESE for what is important for the principal’s role. They are a point of reference and aligned for maximum effects.*

-Superintendent

*They [MLDS competencies, learning experiences, and treatments] are very important. There is a solid framework for the program and the competencies and standards that I remember reviewing were very appropriate for development.*

-Superintendent

## Perceived Importance of MLDS Components in 2019 and 2020

Survey data show that **principals at the Emerging and Developing levels in both 2019 and 2020 believe that all MLDS components are important** (Table 9).

*Table 9. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Importance of MLDS Components in 2019 and 2020*

Component	Year	N	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals’ leadership practices?							
Competencies	2019	388	64%	28%	7%	1%	0%
	2020	109	54%	35%	10%	1%	0%
Learning Experiences	2019	388	82%	15%	3%	0%	0%
	2020	109	83%	11%	6%	0%	0%
Treatments	2019	386	61%	32%	6%	1%	0%
	2020	109	59%	31%	9%	1%	0%

## Perceived Importance of MLDS Components by CSI School Status in 2020

Survey data suggest that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools agree that the MLDS components are important** (Table 10). Compared to the responses of participants at Non-CSI schools, a higher percentage of principals at CSI schools believe that the MLDS treatments are very important (69% vs. 56%).

*Table 10. Perceptions of Principals on Importance of MLDS Components by CSI School Status in 2020*

Component	CSI School Status	N	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices?							
Competencies	CSI	13	54%	38%	8%	0%	0%
	Non-CSI	100	56%	34%	10%	0%	0%
Learning Experiences	CSI	13	85%	8%	8%	0%	0%
	Non-CSI	101	83%	12%	5%	0%	0%
Treatments	CSI	13	69%	23%	8%	0%	0%
	Non-CSI	100	56%	35%	9%	0%	0%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Summary

Survey and interview data consistently show that in 2020, principals, superintendents, and specialists believe that the MLDS components (i.e., competencies, learning experiences, and treatments) are important in strengthening principals' leadership practices and improving student learning. In addition, principals at the Emerging and Developing levels in both 2019 and 2020 believe that the MLDS components are important. Furthermore, data suggest that principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools agree that the MLDS components are important.

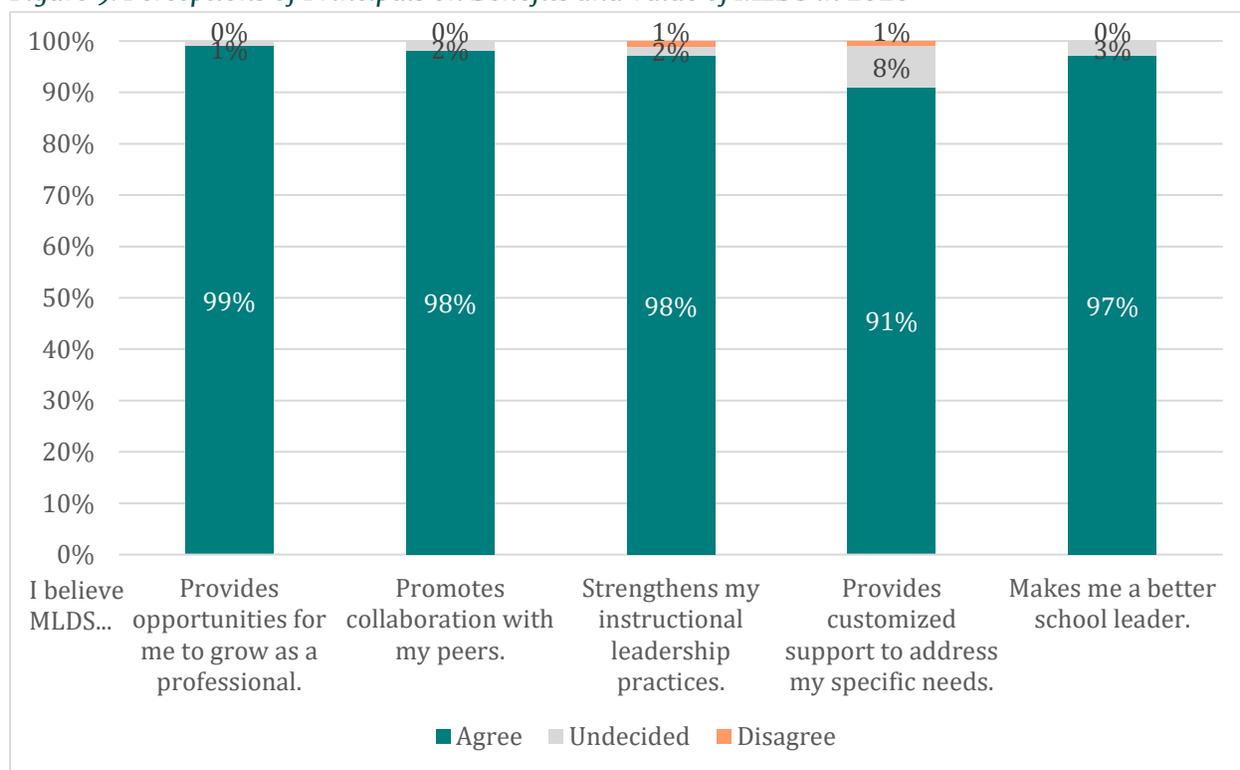
## Chapter Seven: Benefits and Value

This chapter examines the perceptions of principals and superintendents on the benefits and value of participating in MLDS.

### Perceived Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2020

As Figure 9 shows, nearly all (98–99%) principals report that MLDS provides opportunities for professional growth, promotes peer collaboration, and strengthens instructional leadership practices. In brief, MLDS supports building the foundation of leadership skills needed by all school leaders.

Figure 9. Perceptions of Principals on Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2020



Many interviewees attribute their professional growth and positive changes in their leadership practices to MLDS.

*[My participation in MLDS is] so valuable. My time-tracker for example. I've seen my instructional time increase from about 60% to 80% daily. My monthly meetings continue to push my thinking as a leader.*

-Principal

*I've become a better instructional leader because of MLDS.*

-Principal

*It [Participation in MLDS] has made me more reflective in general of the big picture, of the day-to-day, and of what's important and what's peripheral. The reflective practice has been huge and helped me a lot this year especially now that we're in strange territory due to the coronavirus.*

-Principal

*My participation was very valuable over the 2 years of the program as a new principal and the use of the tools made me a better leader for my school site.*

-Principal

In addition, Figure 9 shows that more than 90% of **principals agree that MLDS provides customized support to address their specific needs. Nearly all principals believe that the program makes them better school leaders (97%).**

Principals elaborate on these highly positive perceptions.

*Now I see myself more realistically. It [MLDS] has made me a better leader and allowed me to develop better relationships with my staff.*

-Principal

*I love how they [MLDS specialists, mentors, etc.] work with each building and meet them where they are. They tailor the PD to meet your building needs.*

-Principal

*It is making me a better leader. It has helped me become more positive with staff.*

-Principal

Many respondents highlight the overall benefits and value of the program.

*This program [MLDS] is tried and true in Missouri. One of the most successful in the country. When you have proven professional development theories like these and are a reference for you it is critical to have that. It gives you a resource and guide line to go by.*

-Principal

*As a new principal in the state of Missouri, I attended the MLDS program after receiving an Email. This is one of the best trainings for principals regardless of the years in education or as a principal.*

-Principal

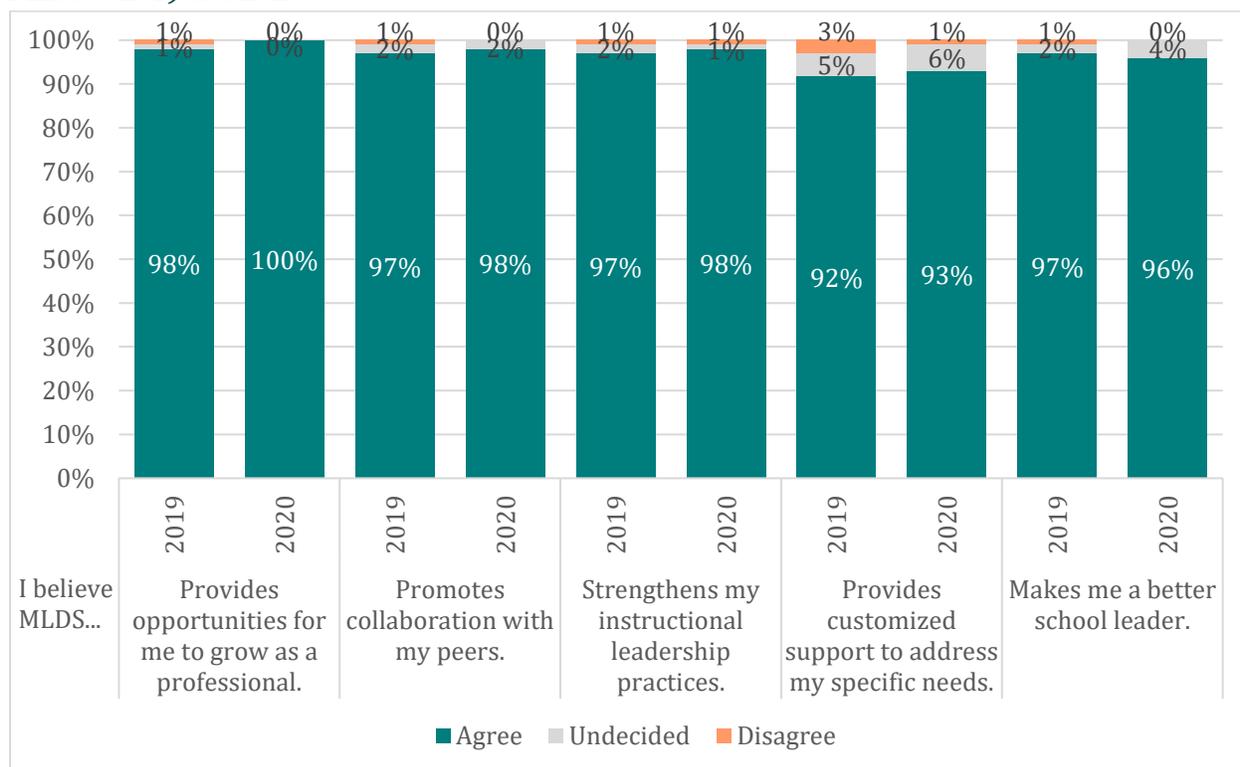
*From what I have seen, people like MLDS.*

-Superintendent

## Perceived Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2019 and 2020

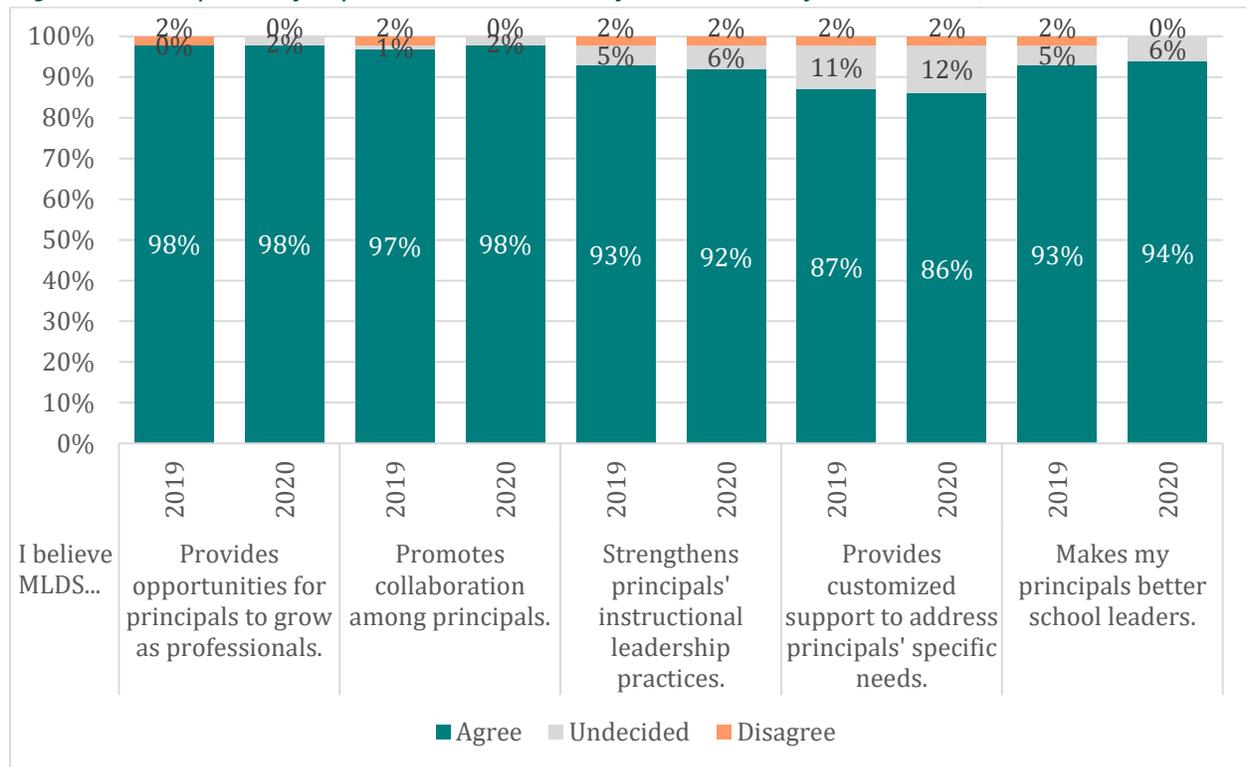
Figures 10 and 11 show that **principals at the Emerging and Developing levels and superintendents in both 2019 and 2020 have very positive perceptions of the benefits and value of MLDS.** In both years, the majority of principals at the Emerging and Developing levels (92–100%) agree that MLDS supports professional growth, promotes collaboration, and strengthens instructional leadership practices. They also believe that MLDS provides customized support and makes principals better school leaders (Figure 10).

*Figure 10. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2019 and 2020*



Similarly, as Figure 11 shows, most superintendents (86–98%) agree in both years that participation in MLDS is beneficial and valuable.

**Figure 11. Perceptions of Superintendents on Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2019 and 2020**



### Perceived Benefits and Value of MLDS by CSI School Status in 2020

Table 11 suggests that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about the benefits and value of MLDS**. A dominant majority of the principals at both CSI schools (85–100%) and Non-CSI schools (92–100%) believe that MLDS provides opportunities for them to grow as professionals, promotes peer collaboration, and strengthens their instructional leadership practices. In addition, they agree that MLDS provides customized support to address their individual needs and makes them better school leaders.

**Table 11. Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2020**

I believe MLDS...	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
Provides opportunities for me to grow as a professional.	13	92%	8%	0%	100	100%	0%	0%
Promotes collaboration with my peers.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	98%	2%	0%
Strengthens my instructional leadership practices.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	98%	1%	1%
Provides customized support to address my specific needs.	13	85%	15%	0%	101	92%	7%	1%
Makes me a better school leader.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	97%	3%	0%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Summary

In both 2019 and 2020, principals and superintendents believe that participating in MLDS is beneficial and valuable. They agree that MLDS provides opportunities for participants to grow professionally, promotes collaboration among professional colleagues, and strengthens participants' instructional leadership practices. They also believe that MLDS provides customized support to address participants' specific needs and makes participants better school leaders.

Data suggest that in 2020, principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are very positive about the benefits and value of MLDS.

## Chapter Eight: Multiple Impacts

This chapter explores the perceptions of principals and superintendents regarding the impact of MLDS on (a) principals' instructional leadership practices, (b) classroom instruction, (c) student achievement, and (d) the professional growth and retention of school leaders.

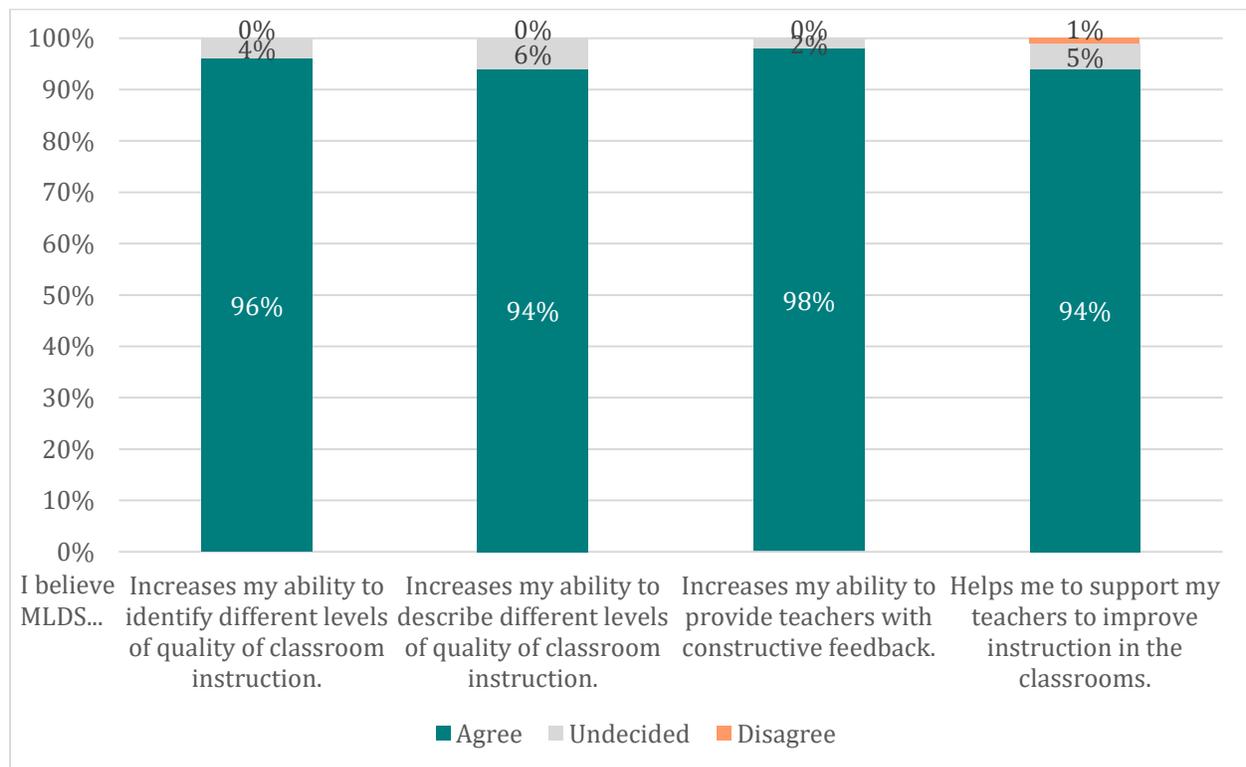
### Perceived Impacts of MLDS in 2020

Survey and interview data show that principals and superintendents are very positive about the impacts of MLDS.

#### Impact on Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices

Figure 12 shows that **principals believe that MLDS improves their instructional leadership practices**. Specifically, principals agree that MLDS increases their ability to identify (96%) and describe (94%) different levels of quality of classroom instruction, and enhances their ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback (98%).

*Figure 12. Perceptions of Principals on Impact of MLDS on Instructional Leadership Practices and Classroom Instruction in 2020*



Many respondents echo and elaborate upon the highly positive perceptions in interviews and survey comments.

*Well I have improved greatly on classroom observations and feedback and that is through MLDS. The training was definitely an improvement for our school. The big one for the teachers has been the feedback.*

-Principal

*Through the conversations that I've had with an elementary school principal who has gone through the program, I know that it [MLDS] is very much focused on feedback to teachers...That's a big part of our focus as a district to improve teachers and administrators, that feedback piece.*

-Superintendent

*I have come back and implemented some things, like 30-second feedback. I had a lot of teachers tell me they appreciated that. In the past, a lot of teachers just received a number rather than useful feedback. That has changed my school, and is something different that hadn't happened in the past that my teachers appreciated.*

-Principal

Respondents also credit MLDS with building trust and confidence between principals and teachers, improving the climate and culture of schools, and changing the mindset of school leaders.

*I think our school has definitely benefitted [from my participation in MLDS] by having stronger relationships and being more open to new ideas. Because I have been able to gain trust with my staff.*

-Principal

*[The differences that MLDS has made for my school include] The conversations with teachers on instruction, school walk throughs. Looking at the school through the eyes of a visitor led to better signage and a more welcome feeling at our school.*

-Principal

*I did notice the principal trying to do some culture and climate stuff with students. Yes, our school has definitely benefited by our principal participating in MLDS.*

-Superintendent

*[MLDS] Streamlined our focus at the school about what we should do. I learned that we do not have to be good at everything all at once. Choose something for focus. Find your strengths and highlight them.*

-Principal

## Perceived Impact on Classroom Instruction

The primary purpose of MLDS is to develop and support school administrators to effectively lead schools that are focused on instruction (e.g., Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019a). Supporting principals to effectively coach teachers is therefore a focus of MLDS.

*Everything we do goes back to coaching. Helping our principals to be better coaches so that their teachers understand quality instruction and the significance of quality instruction...You have a leadership skillset for you to utilize so that the instruction your students are receiving is better than yesterday.*

-Specialist

As Figure 12 shows, 94% of **principals agree that MLDS contributes to improvement in classroom instruction.**

*What I have learned in MLDS has helped me to support my teachers to improve classroom instruction.*

-Principal

*[What makes MLDS effective is its] Helping me understand and improve teacher instruction and feedback during observations.*

-Principal

## Perceived Impact on Student Achievement

It is the expectation of DESE that “the effect of the MLDS learning will, in time, be reflected in student achievement outcomes” and other educator outcomes (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b, p. 5). The focus of MLDS on enhancing school leaders’ instructional leadership practices and improving instruction in all classrooms build the foundation for increasing student learning for all.

*If what we do doesn't lead to higher levels of students learning, we are wasting our time. Leadership matters. Our purpose for schools is to improve the effectiveness of student learning. Quality instruction is the number one job for our building leaders to improve student instruction so that learning increases.*

-Specialist

As Figure 13 and interview data show, **principals believe that MLDS contributes to improved student achievement at their school.**

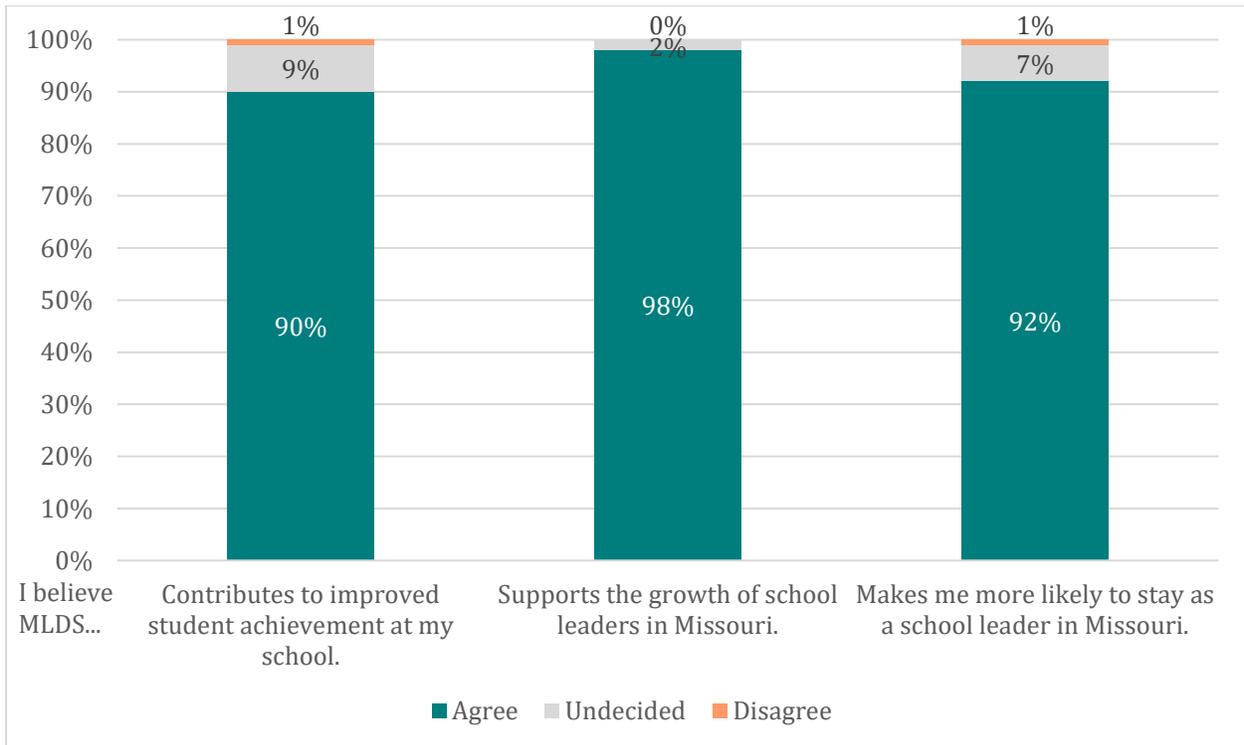
*There is a significant connection between MLDS leadership development and student learning because the program brings the focus on the mission of child well-being and academic success.*

-Specialist

*What we learn at the MLDS meetings helps me to be a better leader and do better evaluations of teachers to make them better, which makes kids learn better.*

-Principal

**Figure 13. Perceptions of Principals on Impact of MLDS on Student Achievement and School Leader Growth and Retention in 2020**



### Impact on School Leader Growth and Retention

Figure 13 shows that nearly all (98%) **principals believe MLDS supports the growth of school leaders in the state**. In interviews, some specialists add that they, too, benefit from the program.

*Having been in administration, I was always a teacher leader. I wanted to develop those leaders around me. The more we share [about MLDS] the more bought in everyone is. I learned to develop teacher leaders and empower them. Several leaders are stepping up.*

-Principal

*DESE has been a big support. However, I often comment to principals that I wish I could have a “do over” for the times when I sat in the principal’s seat. Being exposed to the MLDS world has increased my growth also.*

-Specialist

In addition, more than nine-tenths (92%) of **principals agree that MLDS makes them more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri**. Although data are not yet available to determine the long-term impact of MLDS on school leader retention, early evidence suggests that MLDS contributes to the retention of school leaders.

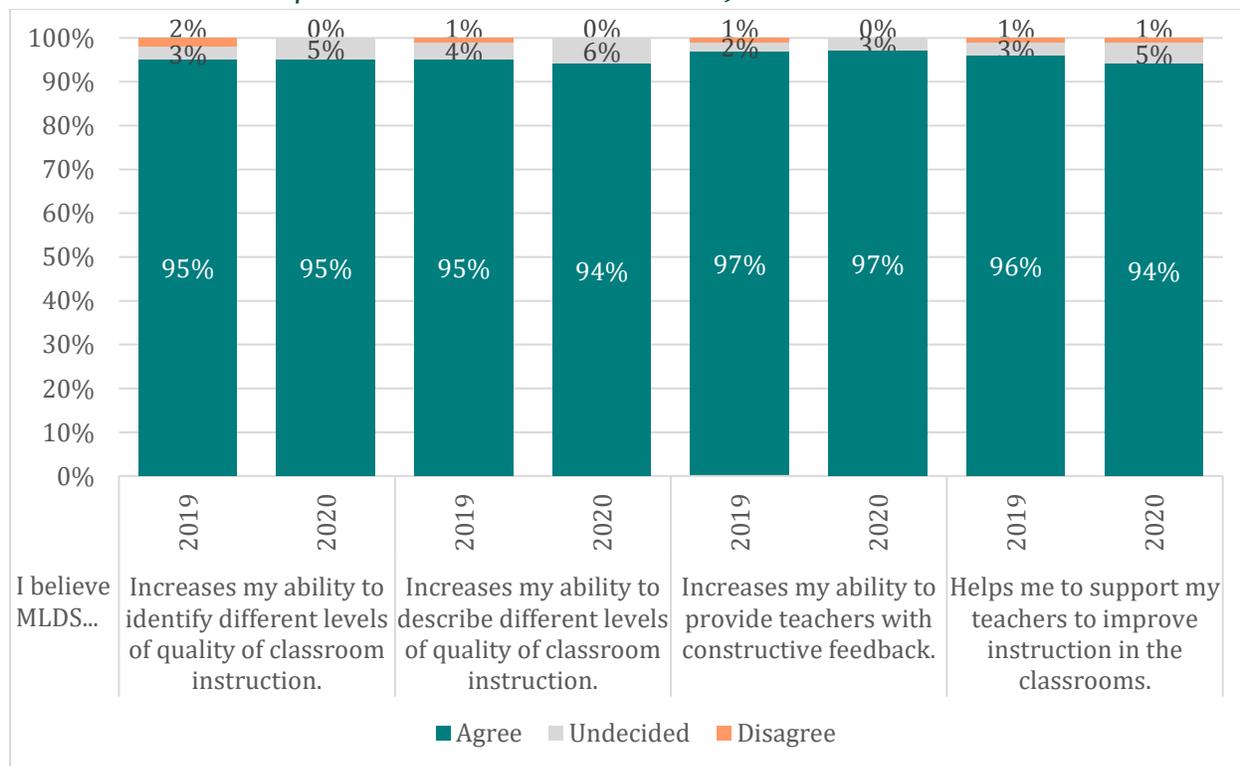
According to DESE’s analysis of the retention rate in Missouri<sup>5</sup> across all levels of principalship, “approximately 77% of first year principals return for a second year. After three years, 51% of Missouri’s principals leave their position. By year five, just 30% of that first year cohort remains” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b, p. 5).

In contrast, 92% of the Emerging Level principals (Years I and II combined) have moved into their second or third year as a building leader. DESE’s analysis of 2018–19 data further indicates that the retention rate for MLDS principals (Emerging Level–Years I and II; Developing Level–Year I) has risen to 97.6% (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as cited in Slotnik & Liang, 2019). DESE’s analysis of the spring 2019 data on principals engaged in the MLDS Emerging and Developing Levels (Years 1–3) further shows that “98.5% have moved into their second or third year as a building leader” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b, p.5).

### Perceived Impacts of MLDS in 2019 and 2020

Figures 14 and 15 show that **principals at the Emerging and Developing levels and superintendents in both 2019 and 2020 are highly positive about the impacts of MLDS.** Across the two years, nearly all (94–97%) principals at the Emerging and Developing levels agree that MLDS increases their ability to identify and describe different levels of quality of instruction, to provide constructive feedback, and to support teachers to improve instruction (Figure 14).

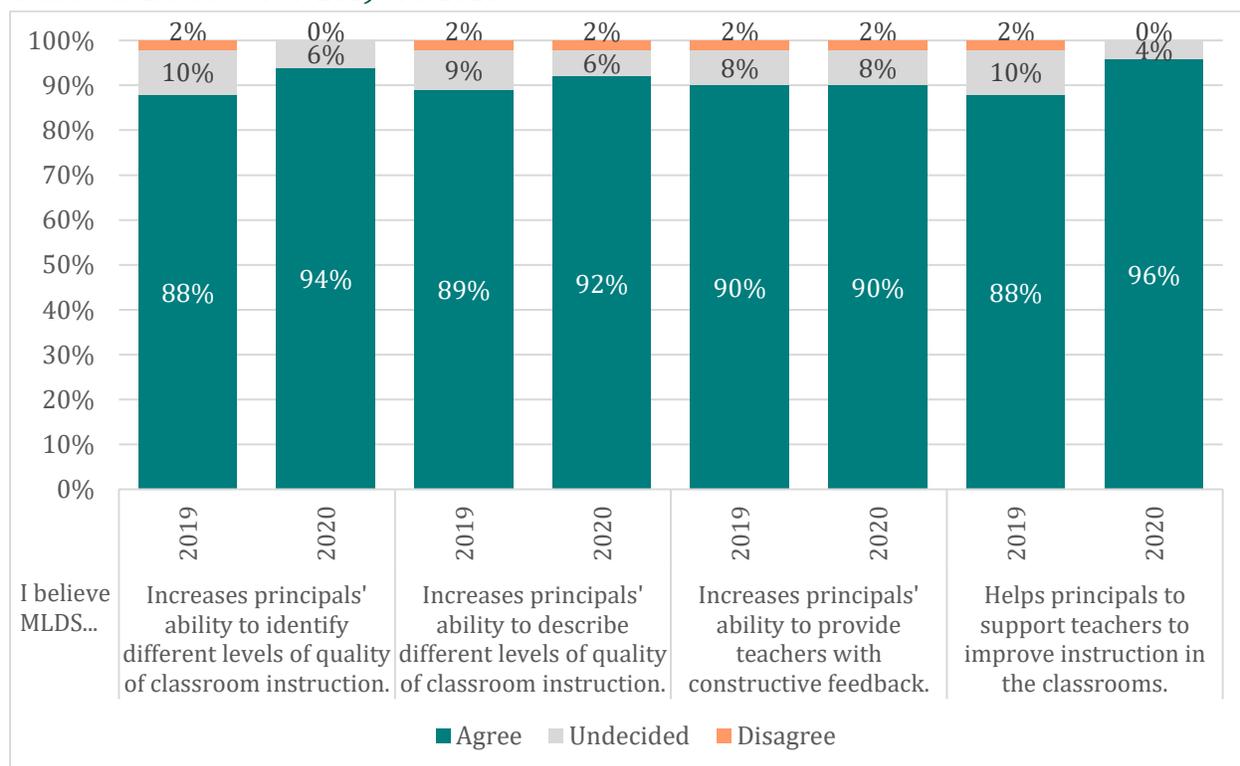
*Figure 14. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Impact of MLDS on Instructional Leadership and Classroom Instruction in 2019 and 2020*



<sup>5</sup> Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education retention rate includes principals who remain a principal anywhere in the state.

Similarly, most superintendents (88–96%) in 2019 and 2020 believe that MLDS contributes to improvements in principals’ instructional leadership and teachers’ classroom instruction (Figure 15).

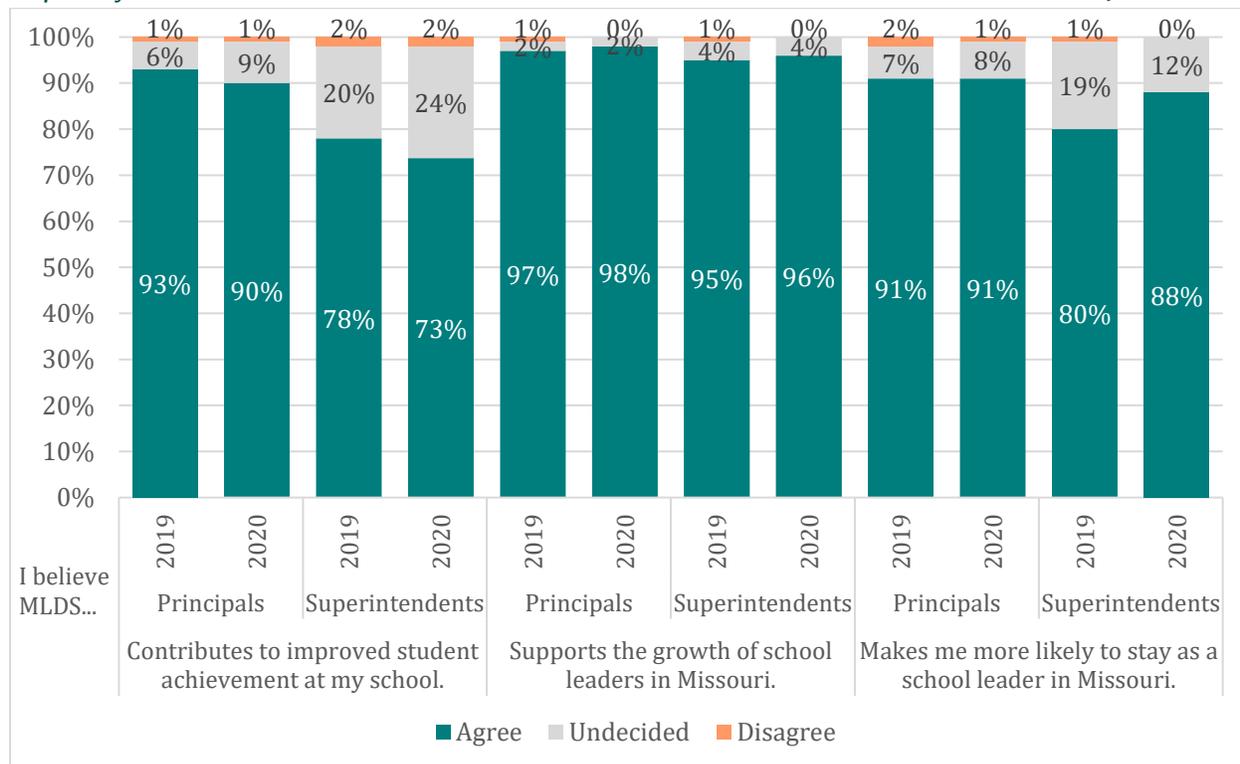
**Figure 15. Perceptions of Superintendents on Impact of MLDS on Instructional Leadership and Classroom Instruction in 2019 and 2020**



In terms of the perceived impact of MLDS on student achievement, Figure 16 shows that 90–93% of principals at the Emerging and Developing levels agree in 2019 and 2020 that MLDS contributes to improved student achievement at their school. Approximately three-fourths (73–78%) of superintendents also agree, and one-fifth of superintendents (20–24%) are undecided.

Figure 16 also shows that the majority of principals (91–98%) and superintendents (80–96%) in both years agree that MLDS supports the growth and retention of school leaders in Missouri.

**Figure 16. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels and Superintendents on Impact of MLDS on Student Achievement and School Leader Growth and Retention in 2019 and 2020**



*Note.* For “I believe MLDS contributes to improved student achievement at my school,” the survey question for superintendents was “I believe MLDS contributes to improved student achievement at schools in my district.” For “I believe MLDS makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri,” the survey question for superintendents was “I believe MLDS makes principals more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri.”

### Perceived Impacts of MLDS by CSI School Status in 2020

Table 12 suggests that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools report very positive perceptions on the impacts of MLDS.** Most principals at both CSI schools (85–100%) and Non-CSI schools (89–98%) agree that MLDS contributes to improvements in instructional leadership, classroom instruction, and student achievement. They also believe that MLDS supports the growth and retention of school leaders in Missouri.

*Table 12. Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Impacts of MLDS in 2020*

I believe MLDS...	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
Increases my ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	96%	4%	0%
Increases my ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	94%	6%	0%
Increases my ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.	13	92%	8%	0%	101	98%	2%	0%
Helps me to support my teachers to improve instruction in the classrooms.	13	85%	15%	0%	101	95%	4%	1%
Contributes to improved student achievement at my school.	13	85%	15%	0%	101	89%	10%	1%
Makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri.	13	85%	15%	0%	100	92%	7%	1%
Supports the growth of school leaders in Missouri.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	98%	2%	0%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

*We are in a school improvement program and we went up in both categories from the previous year. It [MLDS] has helped us that way. The support it provides to me and teachers will make us better. I think it's made me a better leader. I lead better and it can only be beneficial for our school. I feel more comfortable going into next year.*

-Principal

## Summary

Across the two years, principals, superintendents, and specialists consistently believe that the MLDS program contributes to improvements in instructional leadership practices, classroom instruction, and student achievement. They also agree that MLDS helps to build trust and confidence between principals and teachers, improves the climate and culture of the schools, and changes the mindset of school leaders. In addition, they believe that MLDS supports the growth and retention of school leaders in the state.

Furthermore, data suggest that principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are very positive about the perceived impacts of MLDS.

## Chapter Nine: Enhancing Factors

This chapter explores the components of MLDS that principals, superintendents, and specialists perceive as contributing to the effectiveness of the program. Building on and reinforcing these components help to achieve a deeper impact of MLDS throughout the state.

### Networking and Collaboration

Many principals report that **networking and collaboration among principals is a key component making MLDS beneficial and valuable**. Working with professional colleagues provides opportunities for sharing best practices and resources, and promotes social and emotional connections.

*The greatest thing is the networking process that I would not have had otherwise. When we go to the off campus leadership meetings, you find that many principals are in the same place as you are...Because we are able to network, we are able to see the needs that we share. It has opened the door to better resources to address the needs.*

-Principal

*Keeping our cohort together so that we can grow with each other and continue to network is essential.*

-Principal

*I was a part of the early group as a principal myself. The networking and experiences shaped my leadership today.*

-Superintendent

### Hands-On and Relevant Learning Experiences

**Hands-on and relevant learning experiences are a major strength of the program**. Principals collaborate in actual school settings (e.g., through school visits, classroom walkthroughs) and practice their learnings from MLDS. These authentic, real-life experiences help to enhance principals' confidence and improve their leadership practices at their respective schools.

*The learning labs help to practice the skills and make me more confident when implementing them in my own building.*

-Principal

*The real life practice like coaching labs. It's easy to use once I'm back at school. Those helped a lot. I never received any real training about evaluation before that.*

-Principal

*MLDS provides an invaluable expansion through the professional learning network. The topics are all related to effective leadership practices.*

-Superintendent

*Our feedback from our principals is they are getting what they want and need. Superintendents are wanting their principals involved. The coaching labs and others, the feedback is it is working.*

-Specialist

Respondents particularly appreciate that the learnings are relevant to principals' practical needs.

*The objectives of each meeting uniquely coincided with the challenges that I was facing as an emerging leader. When I felt challenged by evaluations and keeping current and effective, our next cohort meeting would feed all of my needs on that very issue. I learned quickly this was time well-invested.*

-Principal

*The fact that the information is relevant to the time the session is offered. Example...the hiring session came right as we started that process!*

-Principal

*My preliminary review was that they [MLDS training materials] seemed to be good...Without context that speaks to our day-to-day experiences, it will not help as much.*

-Superintendent

## Consistency of Implementation

As one specialist mentions, there is both consistency across the state and flexibility of customization to the needs of individual regions or districts in the implementation of MLDS.

*There is fidelity to the MLDS design in the network across the state. There is flexibility in the regions to tweak for the needs of the individual district. There is consistency in design around the state.*

-Specialist

Many principals believe that **consistent implementation contributes to the program's effectiveness**. It ensures that principals across the state, regardless of RPDC region, will get the same learnings. It also supports the development of a common language amongst school leaders, which enhances networking opportunities and hands-on experiences.

*[A] Key factor [is that] there are not many states with statewide impact we are having because everybody in leadership is getting growth. That consistency and continuity and high level of skill for our leaders. We want them to be transformational.*

-Specialist

*[The parts of MLDS that are making it effective are] Creating a common vocabulary for leadership, reflective and thoughtful practice, collaboration with other leaders, the observations/labs.*

-Principal

## Instructional Focus

Interviewees and survey respondents emphasize that **the focus on instruction contributes to the effectiveness of MLDS**. It supports the growth of principals into instructional leaders and the improvement of teachers' classroom instruction.

*[The part of MLDS that is making it effective is] Being able to go into a classroom and observe teacher/students and then discuss amongst other administrators the effectiveness of the teaching. You get such great insight from other principals to help implement ideas in your own feedback to teachers.*

-Principal

*The instructional focus [of MLDS] is huge for principals.*

-Superintendent

*Our focus is instructional leadership. We do labs three times a year and help principals to grow teachers embedded in the classroom.*

-Specialist

## Research-Based Strategies

MLDS is “a comprehensive research-based program,” and it conducts “ongoing research” to “ensure the competencies of the system remain current and relevant and its implementation efficient and effective” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019a, p.8).

Respondents report that MLDS trainings expose principals to various research-based strategies. They believe **the emphasis on research-based strategies help make the program impactful**.

*We learn relevant, up-to-date, research-based skills and strategies. These skills are developed through collaboration and on-going coaching and feedback.*

-Principal

*[The part of MLDS that is making it effective is] Practicing research-based observation and feedback skills.*

-Principal

*Research says the things that we are providing and teaching and coaching our principals and teachers are highly effective practices. We stay with research based highly effective practices.*

-Specialist

## Support from Mentors and Specialists

As Figure 17 shows, **principals are very positive about the support that they receive from the mentors and specialists.** They agree that mentors and specialists effectively support them in their leadership role (99%), understand schools like theirs (96%), and help them to apply what they learn from MLDS to practical situations (98%).

Figure 17. Perceptions of Principals on Mentors and Specialists in 2020



In interviews and survey comments, respondents describe the impact of mentors and specialists.

*MLDS began with core teachings such as promoting positive feedback to teachers to encourage effective teaching. Working through the program, though, my MLDS mentors literally met every question/issue that was brought up by myself or others with 100% effort to give us everything we needed on the topic. They literally met our every need, individually or as a group.*

-Principal

*The specialist really tries to build relationships and make me feel comfortable with the problems I face daily.*

-Principal

*Our specialist is the glue and has great relationships with our principals. The specialist does a great job.*

-Superintendent

*Most recently, the mentor that our elementary school principal had came from a very high-performing district and building and so I know that I can correlate for her the growth that she was able to have is due to her being able to have that positive role model and mentor. Just someone she can bounce ideas off of and call/text at any time. In that aspect, it's been very successful.*

-Superintendent

One superintendent reports benefiting from serving as a mentor.

*The collaboration among different experience levels is very helpful from both ends of it (mentor and mentee). The hands-on practice that are facilitated really helped me even as a mentor.*

-Superintendent

As Figure 18 shows, **principals at the Emerging and Developing levels in both 2019 and 2020 are highly positive about the support they receive from mentors and specialists.** They believe in both years that mentors and specialists effectively support them (96–99%), understand schools like theirs (94–95%), and help them to apply learnings from MLDS to practical situations (96–98%).

**Figure 18. Perceptions of Principals at Emerging and Developing Levels on Mentors and Specialists in 2019 and 2020**

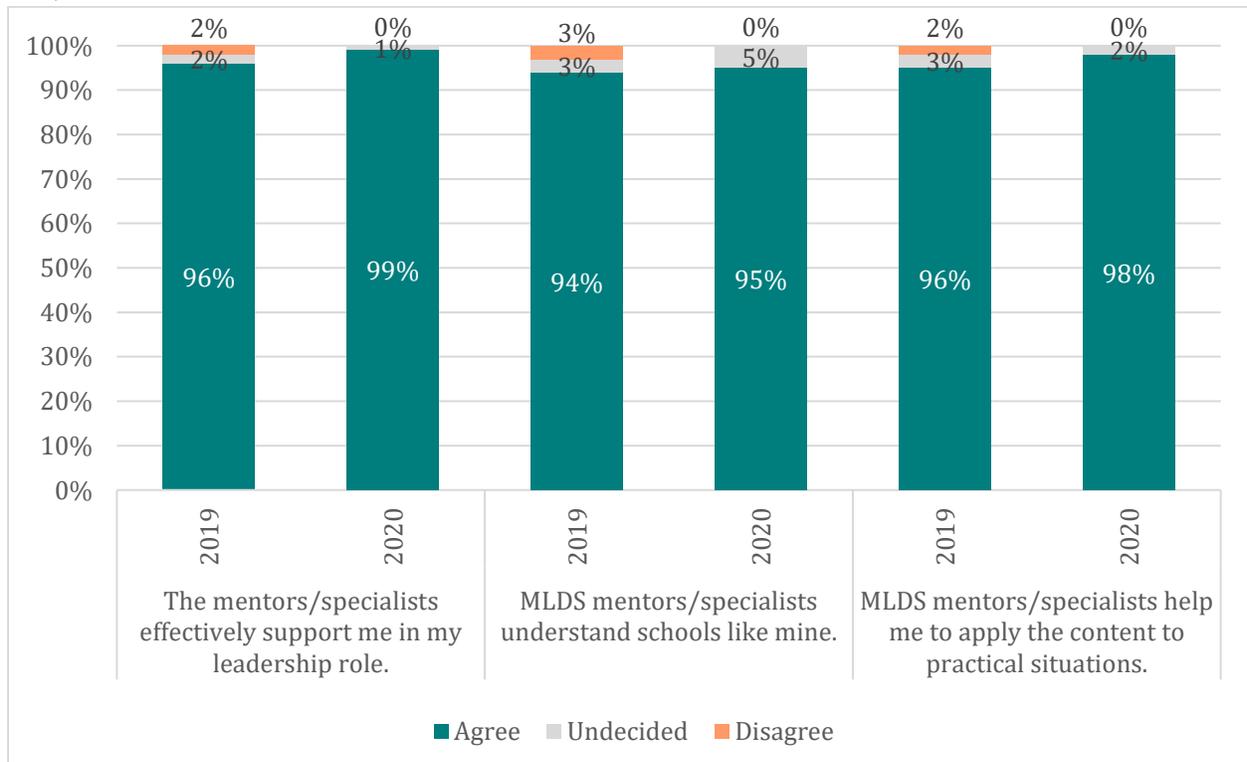


Table 13 suggests that **principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools have very positive perceptions on the support they receive from mentors and specialists**. Most of the principals at CSI schools (85–100%) and Non-CSI schools (97–99%) agree with the survey questions. Compared to principals at Non-CSI schools, principals at CSI schools appear to agree to a lesser extent that MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like theirs (85% vs. 97%).

*Table 13. Perceptions of Principals by CSI School Status on Benefits and Value of MLDS in 2020*

	Principals Leading CSI Schools				Principals Leading Non CSI Schools			
	N	A	U	D	N	A	U	D
The mentors/specialists effectively support me in my leadership role.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	99%	1%	0%
MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like mine.	13	85%	15%	0%	100	97%	3%	0%
MLDS mentors/specialists help me to apply the content to practical situations.	13	100%	0%	0%	101	98%	2%	0%

*Note.* In this table, “principals” refer to the current MLDS participants at the Aspiring, Emerging, and Developing levels because there are no responses from MLDS participants at the Transformational level who are leading CSI schools.

## Summary

Principals, superintendents, and specialists report multiple components contributing to the success of MLDS. They believe that networking and collaboration among principals is a key component making MLDS beneficial and valuable, and that hands-on and relevant learning experiences are a major strength of the program. In addition, they agree that having consistent implementation of the program across the state, which focuses on instruction and research-based strategies, helps to make MLDS particularly effective.

Across the two years of 2019 and 2020 principals believe that the supports from mentors and specialists contribute to the effectiveness of MLDS. In 2020 principals at both CSI and Non-CSI schools are highly positive about the effectiveness of mentors and specialists.

## Chapter Ten: Emerging Issues and COVID-19 Challenges

This chapter describes a few concerns as reported by principals, superintendents, and specialists. Some concerns are a factor of the coronavirus. Others are similar to those reported in Slotnik and Liang (2019) and are outgrowths of program components that are proving to be effective. By examining these concerns, the state can be better prepared with stronger rapid response capabilities, and continue to provide effective support to school leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### MLDS During the Coronavirus

**Principals are highly positive about the support they receive from MLDS both before and since the rise of the pandemic.**

*The support did not change. The method of support switched to online.*

-Principal

*Honestly, it is hard to finish strong this first year with competing priorities, but I must say the support from MLDS through the pandemic was phenomenal.*

-Principal

*MLDS has been successful before and in the COVID pandemic.*

-Principal

Principals report that they continue to receive multiple types of support from MLDS such as Zoom meetings, emails, and weekly updates. Virtually, they learn together about new challenges school leaders all face and support each other on how to overcome these emerging challenges.

*In-person meetings stopped, but principals continued to meet over Zoom. This was beneficial because we were still able to work together and navigate the waters to make sure we continued to do what was best for our students and staff.*

-Principal

*My principals were able to reach out to other to discuss how they were all handling the shutdown and bouncing ideas off each other.*

-Superintendent

*Our specialists provided resources and effective practices to help in the massive transition to remote learning for our students.*

-Principal

*The support that I receive from MLDS during the COVID-19 period is phenomenal. The newsletter, the Zooms, the twitterchats, all of it was incredibly supportive and useful. I'm not sure I would've made it through without it. Think about it, other than GKCPMA through MOASSP,<sup>6</sup> what other organization is there for supporting and growing principals?*

-Principal

### **Principals appreciate the quick responses from MLDS to issues emerging from the pandemic.**

*I felt like it was really adjusted quickly. We had Zoom meetings where all of the questions and discussions were geared toward helping us through this. We had really good discussions and the MLDS Specialist arranged in all quickly.*

-Principal

*MLDS is a system of support and we began immediately to provide support through well person checks, vetting the "down pour" of resources, connecting the professional learning networks together to bounce off ideas, putting forth best practice strategies, and by letting them know they were valued and we were behind them.*

-Specialist

*Once COVID started, Zoom meetings started up.*

-Principal

### **Principals report that they continue to receive valuable assistance from their mentors and the specialists.**

*I enjoyed the opportunities to network with my mentor during the COVID-19 period. It was extremely beneficial to bounce ideas off of each other and to examine the similarities and differences between our districts.*

-Principal

*My mentor and leader reached out to me multiple times to ensure I was doing okay and offer any help they could. There were multiple webinars we were able to attend that hit on relevant topics in the midst of COVID-19.*

-Principal

*The facilitator provided ongoing support during this period. The facilitator was constantly providing them with varied information designed to make them think outside their comfort zone.*

-Superintendent

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<sup>6</sup> GKCPMA: Greater Kansas City Missouri Principals Association; MOASSP: Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals

The availability of recordings of the virtual meetings provide principals with learning opportunities and more scheduling flexibility.

*Due to having to attend many virtual meetings for my school building and district, I could not attend the live virtual sessions MLDS offered. However, I was able to review the previously recorded sessions and still get the information.*

-Principal

**Many principals also believe that they receive enhanced support from MLDS in the time of COVID-19.**

*I was actually able to meet more often with instructors and peers.*

-Principal

*Support was deepened with Zoom meetings and PD opportunities.*

-Principal

*Honestly, the support was increased—there was a constant reach out and presence from the specialist with resources and personal emails.*

-Principal

*I felt like the RPDC became even more present through weekly Zoom meetings and emails.*

-Principal

However, **the COVID-19 pandemic also introduces a new set of challenges to MLDS.** The virus forced the program to move to a virtual format with a lot of reschedules and cancellations of offerings.

*Networking and collaboration were not eliminated but was different because it had to be done virtually.*

-Specialist

Shifting to a virtual model results in fewer opportunities for in-person meetings, onsite observations, and face-to-face networking among professional colleagues, all of which are highly valued by principals. Some principals who prefer face-to-face collaboration rather than virtual meetings, feel that they are less connected and the learnings are less effective.

*Like everything else, it went virtual. This is not my natural method of learning and building relationships, so it's a struggle.*

-Principal

*I didn't feel as connected.*

-Principal

Recognizing the benefits of both in-person and virtual learnings, there are discussions on the development of a blended format of the program down the road.

*A benefit of COVID is that the state team has been meeting weekly two hours every Thursday...There is great value in meeting face-to-face, but there is also value in meeting more frequently. We are talking about a blended format moving forward...We feel like there are components that should stay virtual, and then there are other things we think should be face-to-face to build relationships.*

-Specialist

Technology instability and unavailability also prevent some principals from collaborating and networking with colleagues virtually.

*I was updated frequently with dates and times of Zoom meetings. I wasn't able to attend all of them because of poor internet service at my house.*

-Principal

*I believe the support was probably still there but because of where I live, I was not able to attend Zoom meetings.*

-Principal

According to the latest data (as of September 9, 2020) from DESE,<sup>7</sup> nearly half of all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state (i.e., 46%, or 257 LEAs, serving 40% of all students) are providing students with on-campus instruction with the option to families for distance learning. In addition, one-third of LEAs (i.e., 33%, or 182 LEAs, serving 11% of all students) engage student learning solely on campus. Also, to support social distancing, students in 66 LEAs (i.e., 12%, serving 26% of all students) are receiving instruction away from campus. For students in the remaining 51 LEAs (i.e., 9%, serving 23% of all students), some receive instruction on campus while others are taking part in distance learning.

The different patterns of instruction in the midst of COVID-19 add a new layer of complexity to the nuanced professional growth needs of school leaders across the state. For example, principals in schools providing on-campus instructions may need assistance from MLDS about ensuring a safe learning environment, while principals in similar schools providing virtual learnings may need skills supporting teachers to engage students.

As the 2020–2021 school year begins, many principals and superintendents report that they are navigating through the unknown and figuring out how to keep improving instruction and student learning.

*The unknown is my biggest challenge right now.*

-Principal

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<sup>7</sup> LEA Pattern of Instruction, retrieved on September 9, 2020, from <https://dese.mo.gov/communications/coronavirus-covid-19-information>. “Distanced” instruction and “distanced” learning are the terms that DESE used.

*Just the uncertainty. Is the governor going to close schools again? We don't know. What is our attendance requirement? How will budget be impacted? Are students and teachers going to show up? If teachers don't come, what am I going to do for substitutes? They are really hard to come by in a rural area.*

-Principal

*Since all the gears are turning to remote learning, there should be a bigger focus of MLDS on what to do as a principal with remote teaching and learning.*

-Principal

*I would say that, by far, figuring out how to educate children in a safe environment in this pandemic is the greatest challenge I am facing.*

-Superintendent

In addition to the new issues surfaced with the coronavirus, the same issues that were reported in the 2019 formative review (Slotnik & Liang, 2019) re-emerge as areas for improvement based on interviews and survey responses.

## Time Away from Building

Many principals report that being able to network and collaborate with other professional colleagues, via MLDS, is a strength of the program. Having the time away to engage in real-life learning activities together is beneficial and valuable.

*I always feel like the time I spend on MLDS is well worth it and is well-thought out.*

-Principal

*I was thrilled to participate and I am glad DESE sent an email and invited me to participate in MLDS. Of course I don't like being out of my building but I looked forward to the training sessions, so it was time well spent and valuable.*

-Principal

*[The parts of MLDS that are making it effective include] opportunity to have time away from their campus to reflect on their professional practice.*

-Superintendent

However, this program strength sometimes also poses challenges, and is noted even before the emergence of the coronavirus. **A few principals and superintendents report the time away from their building as a concern.** High frequency, long duration away during school hours is particularly challenging for those who serve as the only administrator in smaller schools.

*The time out of the building is difficult to manage. In small schools, it is imperative that building leaders be on campus on a regular basis.*

-Principal

*I know it is a necessary part but it seems like time away from building [is impeding the effectiveness of MLDS].*

-Superintendent

*I can't always attend the trainings during the day because I can't leave my building.*

-Principal

## Groupings of Principals in MLDS Trainings

**Many respondents hope that the groupings of principals within MLDS trainings can be further differentiated to better accommodate the nuanced differences among principals and schools.** They can be differentiated based on the school or grade level.

*My world at an elementary school is very different from the life of someone in a high school...I learned things from the middle and high schools, but maybe even school size would be a better way to separate it [MLDS trainings] because the resources I had at a small school are very, very different.*

-Principal

*[The parts of MLDS that are impeding its effectiveness is the] lack of distinction between primary and secondary leadership.*

-Principal

The groupings can also be differentiated based on school or district size, or community context (e.g., urban vs. rural).

*I am a principal in a very small rural district. I feel like MLDS, in my opinion, focuses on the bigger school districts and how they function. Not everything is a one size fits all. Yes, I did come away with a lot of useful information, however during my first 2 years I struggled more with daily issues like discipline, parents, building operations, bus issues, sports co-ops and so on. I do not remember any of these things being discussed at our meetings.*

-Principal

*I feel that it is hard to implement everything that MLDS teaches us because I am at such a small school. Implementation is difficult when we are a singleton teacher/principal small school.*

-Principal

*I just always want to make sure there's a component that's going to touch on small schools. Our smaller school district principals wear a lot more hats than somebody at a large district. Sometimes their daily work is going to be different from somebody who's over a building in Springfield.*

-Superintendent

Pairing principals with trainers who have similar background is also seen as important.

*It is important to have some facilitators that have similar experiences (e.g., urban, rural, elementary, secondary) to participants. While we can also learn from others, the similar component is needed.*

-Superintendent

## Consistency of Quality Support from Mentors

Survey and interview data in both 2019 and 2020 show that the mentoring component of MLDS makes significant contribution to the effectiveness of the program (see Chapter Nine), yet **some respondents believe there is room for improvement for more consistent and effective mentoring.**

*In one of my schools, I'd say it [MLDS] has been a little less effective just based on who the mentor was...I wonder whether we could have screened and found someone more effective in the role for the principal.*

-Superintendent

*Some mentors are much less involved than others.*

-Principal

*There is need for consistent mentor support but, again, time and geography are a challenge. Lack of personnel in some areas such as mentorship is an issue.*

-Specialist

## Program Scale and Customized Support

DESE strives to enhance the capabilities of the program to accommodate the increasing professional growth needs of principals. DESE enhanced the capabilities of the program to accommodate the increasing number of and professional growth needs for principals, by increasing the number of specialists from nine to 16 since 2017.

Specialists continue to have concerns that **scaling up the program makes it a challenge to provide more customized assistance to a growing number of MLDS principals.**

*The growing numbers are making it hard to provide that individualized instruction and focus on those relationships.*

-Specialist

*The growth of the program is making it difficult to keep up and maintain the quality which, I feel, we all believe is an important part of the work we do.*

-Specialist

## Summary

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the program goes virtual, principals are very positive about the support they receive from MLDS. Many principals believe that MLDS continues to provide high-quality and enhanced support to the professional growth of school leaders across the state.

A number of principals and superintendents report the time away from their building as a concern, although this issue is less pronounced during the pandemic. There are also concerns related to the differentiated groupings of principals in MLDS trainings, and consistency and effectiveness of support from mentors. As MLDS scales up across levels, providing customized assistance to meet the individual needs of all principals is becoming challenging.

## Chapter Eleven: Issues and Recommendations

Through the Leadership Development System, Missouri continues to focus on the development and support of effective school leaders across the state. In 2020, the dominant recommendation by principals, superintendents, and specialists is to build on current program strengths and extend customized services that address emerging, pandemic-related needs. Data from both interviews and survey responses show clearly that the first year of full implementation of the program is well-received by the field, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, the following issues and recommendations focus on helping DESE to make targeted refinements to MLDS.

### Issue One: School Leadership During a Period of Uncertainty

#### Overview

The unprecedented coronavirus brings many unknowns to the whole field. Approximately 80% of the LEAs in the state are currently providing students with full or partial on-campus instruction. Principals are facing enormous operational challenges such as staff and student safety, transportation, and meals. **It is important that MLDS continue to provide the support system to principals, proven effective to-date, so they can remain focused on instruction and student learning.**

Principals need well-honed skills to identify the quality and impact of instruction that is actually taking place and the observable level of student engagement. They also need assistance in understanding the learning progress that students are making, given that state test data will not be available for the 2019–2020 school year. In addition, principals will need two-way communications consistently throughout the year with staff, parents, and the community to build constituencies in support of school improvement.

#### Recommended Action

*Expand support to principals to address issues emerging from COVID-19.* The pandemic presents multiple challenges to school leaders. Principals express a strong interest in learning more from MLDS on how they can keep helping teachers and students to advance learning whether through in-school, blended, or remote learning environments. Building on trainings the program already provides, MLDS can further increase the relevance and applicability of learning activities. This is accomplished by focusing on strategies and practices to improve teacher instruction and student learning as schools explore the best and safest ways to provide a high quality education. Topics may include, but should not be limited to, how students are engaged in learning, how student learning progress is being measured, how effective teachers are with their instructional practices, and how collaboration at multiple levels (e.g., teacher-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and student-to-student) is being carried out. In addition, stress resulting from the pandemic is affecting entire educational communities. It is therefore important that MLDS support principals to be prepared to successfully address the social and emotional needs of students, teachers, and parents.

*Explore a hybrid of training formats.* Many principals believe that the in-person networking and collaboration opportunities are a cornerstone and major strength of the program. There are also principals who value the flexibility of virtual learnings through which they can participate without leaving their building. The program should keep exploring a hybrid of training formats that may include (a) providing principals with virtual collaboration opportunities; (b) delivering trainings via the internet; and (c) making available an online video library of trainings. As MLDS uses electronic formats such as the video library, it is advisable to develop check-ins to ascertain the level of utilization of these resources by principals. Lastly, by following the established safety guidelines from federal and state agencies, MLDS can potentially provide opportunities for small groups of principals to choose to collaborate and network in-person.

*Use technology to strengthen the relevance and applicability of learning activities.* When the MLDS learning activities are relevant and applicable to individual contexts or school characteristics, principals find the program most valuable. To better accommodate the nuanced differences among principals and schools, MLDS can develop opportunities resulting from the current electronic learning environment to (a) group and convene principals based on school characteristics (e.g., school level, enrollment, and locale); and (b) align the background and experience of specialists or speakers with those of the principals.

*Examine opportunities to improve technological connections for MLDS participants.* Making virtual learnings successful requires having reliable internet services. Some principals report that the unavailability or instability of internet services in their areas undermine their ability to participate in learning activities. It also affects how well their schools are able to provide blended or remote learning. MLDS might consider helping principals explore what types of partnerships can be developed in their communities so that principals, as with their students and teachers, can take full advantage of available learning opportunities.

*Keep focusing on research-based practices and strategies.* Many principals find the research-based practices and strategies they learn from MLDS to be valuable and beneficial. They believe that such practices and strategies enhance their leadership skills and contributes to improvements in instruction and student achievement. Therefore, MLDS should continue to regularly disseminate research-based practices and strategies on leadership development, instruction, and student learning.

## Issue Two: Mentors and Specialists

### Overview

Principals believe that mentors and specialists play a pivotal role in leadership development. In both 2019 and 2020, they are highly positive about the support they receive from mentors and specialists. Continuing to build the capacity of mentors and specialists, and ensuring the quality and consistency of their support, are key to the continued effectiveness of MLDS.

## Recommended Action

*Review procedures and practices related to the mentor component.* Most principals and superintendents believe that mentors across the state are highly effective in supporting the development of school leaders. However, there are concerns that some mentors are not meeting the needs of principals. To ensure that all principals receive high-quality, ongoing assistance from mentors, MLDS should review the procedures and practices related to the mentor component of the program (e.g., supervision, qualifications, expectations, responsibilities, frequency of contact, trainings to mentors) and determine where modifications may be needed.

*Continue to build the specialist team.* Principals and superintendents speak highly of the specialists, and many principals hope to receive continued and more customized assistance. The number of specialists increased from nine in 2016–2017 to 16 in 2019–2020 (i.e., a 78 percentage point increase). These additions broaden the capability of the specialist team to accommodate increasing participation of principals. During the same period, however, the number of participants in the program rose from 150 to 1,080, thus the participant-specialist ratio increased markedly from 17:1 to 68:1.<sup>8</sup> As a result, resources currently available prevent the specialists from fully meeting the growth needs of principals. Therefore, the state should continue to place a priority on building the specialist team to meet the needs of all principals across the state.

## Summary

In 2020, leaders and practitioners across the state indicate that MLDS is being implemented with fidelity, is effectively developing school leaders, and is moving in the right direction. They continue to believe that the program is having a highly positive impact on leadership practices, classroom instruction, and student learning.

The rise of the COVID-19 pandemic brings a high level of unknowns to the whole field. It adds an extra layer of complexity as well as new challenges for MLDS to keep effectively assisting principals, and for principals to continue to engage teachers and students in improving teaching and learning.

In the year ahead, by focusing on instruction and student learning, MLDS will be well-positioned to anticipate issues that may come up and to build its quick response capabilities. As new challenges emerge for principals, the program can respond in real time. Support from the program can also help school leaders across the state to lead their schools effectively during a period of uncertainty.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019b, p.4), “During the 2016–17 school year, nine regionally located leadership development specialists engaged 150 principals in the MLDS learning.” See Table 1 for the numbers of MLDS participants and specialists.

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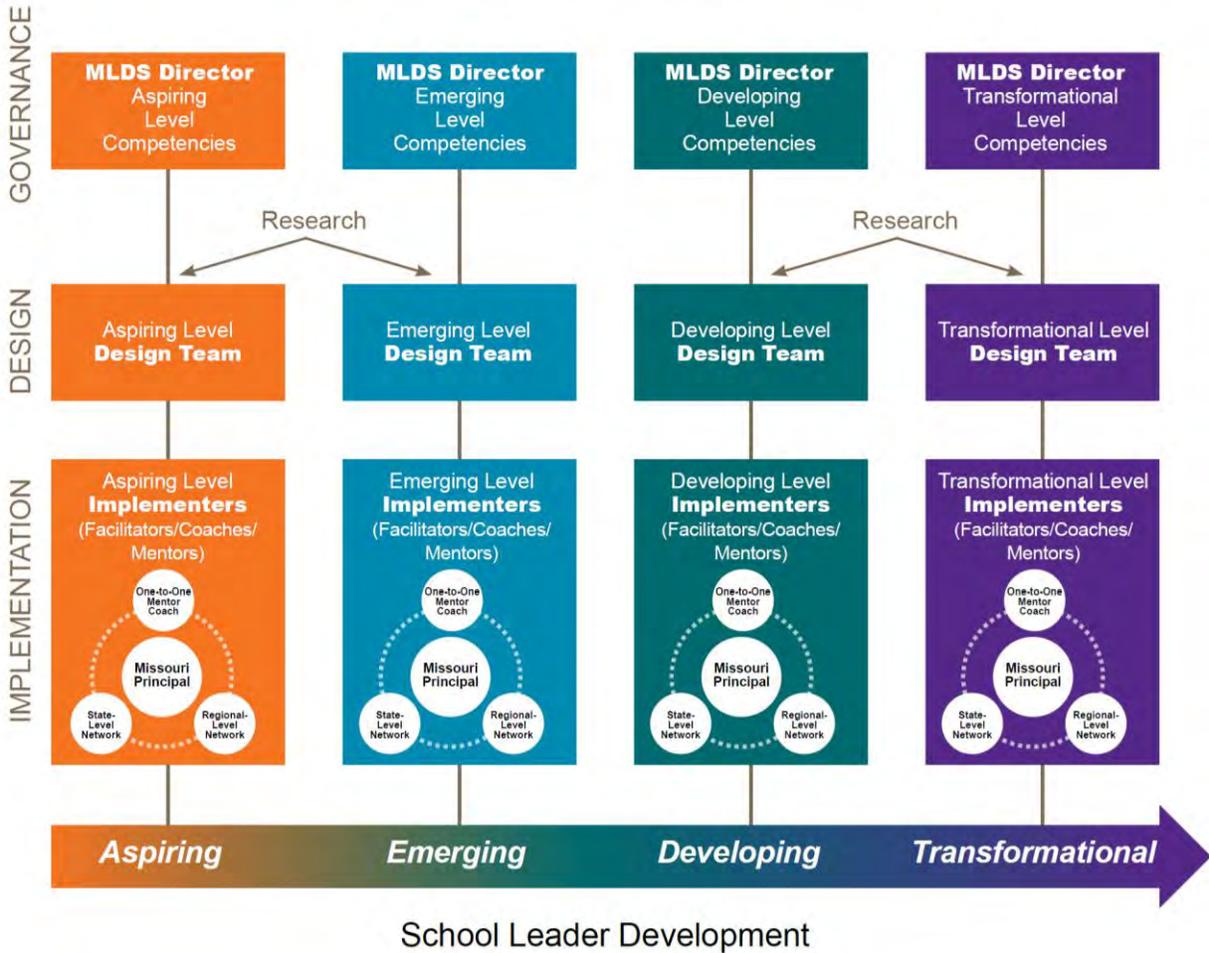
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# Appendix A: MLDS Organizational Chart

## The MLDS Commission

State Educational Agency | Education Administration Programs  
Professional Associations | Regional Service Centers



Source: MLDS Emerging Level Participant Guide. Available at <https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/missouri-leadership-development-system>

# Appendix B: MLDS 2-Year Implementation Calendar for Emerging Level Principals

LE 1 Critical Firsts | 
 LE 2 Excellent Instruction | 
 LE 3 Understand Self & Others | 
 LE 4 Decision Making | 
 LE 5 Shaping School Culture | 
 LE 6 Making Time

<b>2016</b>	July	Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
	Aug.	Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
	Sept.	Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	Oct.	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
		Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	Nov.	Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>			
<b>2017</b>	Dec.	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
	Feb.	Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>
	Mar.	Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
		Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>
	May	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>
		Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	July	Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>			
	Aug.	Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	Sept.	Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	Oct.	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>			
	Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>					
<b>2018</b>	Nov.						
	Dec.	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
	Jan.						
	Feb.	Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
	Mar.	Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>
		Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>				
April	Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span>	
May							
June							

Source: MLDS Emerging Level Participant Guide. Available at <https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/missouri-leadership-development-system>

## Appendix C: Perceptions of Previous MLDS Principals

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<b>Overall Perceptions</b>					
The purpose of MLDS is clear to me.	2019	58	98%	0%	2%
	2020	34	97%	3%	0%
I know where to get information about MLDS.	2019	58	95%	2%	3%
	2020	34	97%	0%	3%
I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.	2019	58	90%	2%	9%
	2020	34	94%	3%	3%
I see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.	2019	58	93%	5%	2%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%
I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.	2019	58	86%	5%	9%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%
I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.	2019	58	93%	3%	3%
	2020	34	85%	15%	0%
<b>Fidelity of Implementation</b>					
The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal.	2019	58	93%	5%	2%
	2020	34	97%	3%	0%
The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills.	2019	58	97%	2%	2%
	2020	34	88%	12%	0%
The mentors/specialists effectively support me in my leadership role.	2019	58	93%	3%	3%
	2020	34	97%	3%	0%
I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school.	2019	58	95%	2%	3%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%
<b>Professional Development</b>					
MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices.	2019	58	100%	0%	0%
	2020	34	97%	3%	0%
The professional development content is relevant to my needs as a school leader.	2019	58	93%	5%	2%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%
MLDS mentors/specialists help me to apply the content to practical situations.	2019	58	95%	2%	3%
	2020	34	94%	3%	3%
MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like mine.	2019	58	93%	3%	3%
	2020	34	97%	0%	3%
The training materials are relevant to me.	2019	57	96%	2%	2%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I use what I learn from MLDS to strengthen my leadership practices.	2019	58	97%	2%	2%
	2020	34	94%	3%	3%
I network with other MLDS principals.	2019	58	91%	3%	5%
	2020	34	88%	6%	6%
MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri.	2019	58	91%	3%	5%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%
<b>Benefits and Value   I believe MLDS...</b>					
Provides opportunities for me to grow as a professional.	2019	58	98%	0%	2%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%
Promotes collaboration with my peers.	2019	58	100%	0%	0%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%
Provides customized support to address my specific needs.	2019	58	88%	7%	5%
	2020	34	85%	12%	3%
Strengthens my instructional leadership practices.	2019	58	97%	2%	2%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%
Makes me a better school leader.	2019	58	97%	2%	2%
	2020	34	94%	3%	3%
<b>Impact   I believe MLDS...</b>					
Increases my ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	2019	58	93%	3%	3%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%
Increases my ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction. *	2019	58	88%	7%	5%
	2020	34	91%	6%	3%
Increases my ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.	2019	58	98%	0%	2%
	2020	34	94%	6%	0%
Helps me to support my teachers to improve instruction in the classrooms.	2019	58	93%	5%	2%
	2020	34	88%	12%	0%
Contributes to improved student achievement at my school.	2019	58	88%	10%	2%
	2020	34	88%	9%	3%
Makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri.	2019	58	90%	5%	5%
	2020	34	85%	12%	3%
Supports the growth of school leaders in Missouri.	2019	58	98%	0%	2%
	2020	34	91%	9%	0%

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree. *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level using Mann-Whitney U Tests based on the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.

MLDS Component	Year	N	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices?							
Competencies	2019	58	59%	34%	3%	2%	2%
	2020	34	62%	29%	9%	0%	0%
Learning Experiences	2019	58	78%	17%	3%	0%	2%
	2020	33	85%	6%	9%	0%	0%
Treatments	2019	58	55%	38%	3%	2%	2%
	2020	34	59%	26%	15%	0%	0%

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.

## Appendix D: Perceptions of Non-MLDS Principals

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<b>Knowledge</b>					
I am aware of MLDS.	2019	93	82%	4%	14%
	2020	31	81%	10%	10%
I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.	2019	94	46%	13%	41%
	2020	30	63%	13%	23%
I know how to get involved in MLDS.	2019	94	57%	10%	33%
	2020	31	58%	19%	23%
I see a connection between leadership development and leadership practices.	2019	95	89%	5%	5%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
I see a connection between leadership development and student learning.	2019	95	93%	3%	4%
	2020	31	97%	3%	0%
I see a connection between leadership practices and student learning.	2019	95	94%	2%	4%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
<b>Value and Impact   <i>I believe high quality leadership development and support...</i></b>					
Provides opportunities for principals to grow as professionals.	2019	94	97%	2%	1%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
Promotes collaboration among principals.	2019	94	97%	2%	1%
	2020	31	97%	3%	0%
Strengthens principals' instructional leadership practices.	2019	94	94%	5%	1%
	2020	31	97%	3%	0%
Builds principals' confidence as school leaders.	2019	94	94%	5%	1%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
Increases principals' ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	2019	94	93%	6%	1%
	2020	31	97%	3%	0%
Increases principals' ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	2019	94	93%	6%	1%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
Increases principals' ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.	2019	94	93%	6%	1%
	2020	31	94%	6%	0%
Helps principals support teachers' classroom instruction.	2019	94	95%	4%	1%
	2020	31	100%	0%	0%
Contributes to improved student achievement at a principals' school.	2019	94	94%	5%	1%
	2020	31	87%	13%	0%

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Makes principals more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri.	2019	94	84%	12%	4%
	2020	31	81%	19%	0%
Supports the growth of principals in Missouri.	2019	94	94%	5%	1%
	2020	31	97%	3%	0%

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree. *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level using Mann-Whitney U Tests based on the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5= Strongly Agree. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.

## Appendix E: Perceptions of Non-MLDS Superintendents

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<b>General Beliefs</b>					
I am aware of MLDS.	2019	57	86%	5%	9%
	2020	29	93%	3%	3%
I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis. *	2019	57	51%	18%	32%
	2020	32	78%	13%	9%
I know how to get involved in MLDS.	2019	58	72%	12%	16%
	2020	32	78%	6%	16%
I see a connection between leadership development and leadership practices. *	2019	58	90%	9%	2%
	2020	32	97%	3%	0%
I see a connection between leadership development and student learning.	2019	58	91%	7%	2%
	2020	32	94%	6%	0%
I see a connection between leadership practices and student learning. *	2019	58	93%	7%	0%
	2020	32	100%	0%	0%
<b>Value and Impact   I believe high quality leadership development and support...</b>					
Provides opportunities for principals to grow as professionals.	2019	58	95%	5%	0%
	2020	32	100%	0%	0%
Promotes collaboration among principals.	2019	58	98%	2%	0%
	2020	32	100%	0%	0%
Strengthens principals' instructional leadership practices.	2019	58	95%	5%	0%
	2020	32	91%	9%	0%
Builds principals' confidence as school leaders.	2019	58	97%	3%	0%
	2020	32	94%	6%	0%
Increases principals' ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	2019	58	91%	9%	0%
	2020	32	94%	3%	3%
Increases principals' ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.	2019	57	91%	7%	2%
	2020	32	94%	3%	3%
Increases principals' ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.	2019	57	93%	4%	4%
	2020	32	94%	6%	0%
Helps principals support teachers' classroom instruction.	2019	57	96%	4%	0%
	2020	32	91%	9%	0%
Contributes to improved student achievement at a principals' school.	2019	57	93%	7%	0%
	2020	32	91%	9%	0%

	Year	N	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Makes principals more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri.	2019	57	86%	12%	2%
	2020	32	88%	13%	0%
Supports the growth of principals in Missouri.	2019	56	91%	7%	2%
	2020	32	97%	3%	0%

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree. *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level using Mann-Whitney U Tests based on the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5= Strongly Agree. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.