

# Key Features of a Comprehensive Principal Evaluation System

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INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

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# Key Features of a Comprehensive Principal Evaluation System

Drawn from a comprehensive review of research and professional literature on principal evaluation<sup>(1)</sup>, 13 *Key Features* were identified as representing elements critical in establishing a comprehensive principal evaluation system. The *Key Features* were validated through (1) focus groups of superintendents, human resource administrators, principals, and professors of education administration, and (2) numerous conversations with individual practitioners, experts, and researchers in K-12 and higher education, instructional leadership, and personnel evaluation. In addition, the *Key Features* were reviewed against the personnel evaluation standards described in the *Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) Framework 2009*<sup>(2)</sup>.

The *Key Features* are organized around three evaluation questions:

**WHY EVALUATE PRINCIPALS?** The *Key Features* addressing this question are:

1. Clear Purpose
2. Mission Alignment
3. Professional Growth
4. District Policy

**WHAT SHOULD BE EVALUATED?** The *Key Features* addressing this question are:

5. Clear Expectations
6. Leadership Research and Standards
7. Principal Participation

**HOW SHOULD PRINCIPALS BE EVALUATED?** The *Key Features* addressing this question are:

- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 8. Multiple Forms of Data        | 11. Adaptable Procedures             |
| 9. Technically Sound Information | 12. Evaluator Training               |
| 10. Ongoing Processes            | 13. System Review and Accountability |

The *Key Features* can be used for two purposes:

- **RESEARCH:** To provide a basis on which to study district implementation and resources in support of these features (and their possible connection to improving student outcomes).
- **PRACTICE:** To provide a basis from which school districts look at the systems, practices, and support framing their principal evaluation systems.

By serving both purposes, the *Key Features* support the development of coherent principal evaluation systems. Using the *Key Features* also facilitates collaboration among various stakeholder groups working to improve how principals are evaluated.

## Why Evaluate?

1

**Clear Purpose:** Why does the district evaluate principals?

2

**MISSION ALIGNMENT:** Does the evaluation system advance the school and district mission to improve teaching and learning for all students?

3

**PROFESSIONAL GROWTH:** Does the evaluation system promote and support the professional development and growth of the principal?

4

**DISTRICT POLICY:** Does the district's organizational structure and its supporting policies and procedures support and guide the evaluation system?

## Evaluate What?

5

**CLEAR EXPECTATIONS:** Does the evaluation system provide clear expectations for principal performance and are these consistently and clearly communicated?

6

**LEADERSHIP RESEARCH AND STANDARDS:** Is the evaluation system supported by research and does it address important national and state professional standards?

7

**PRINCIPAL PARTICIPATION:** Do principals participate in setting and prioritizing their individual professional goals and objectives in relation to district and school goals?

## How to Evaluate?

8

**MULTIPLE FORMS OF DATA:** Does the evaluation system use multiple forms and sources of data (evidence) that include input from a range of people who work with the principal?

9

**TECHNICALLY SOUND INFORMATION:** Does the evaluation system provide technically sound information for making valid, reliable, fair, and defensible decisions?

10

**ONGOING PROCESSES:** Does the evaluation system include opportunities to gather and review evaluation evidence through ongoing and regular interactions between the evaluator and principal?

11

**ADAPTABLE PROCEDURES:** Is the system sufficiently flexible and adaptable to adjust for variable school and community contexts, needs, and unique circumstances faced by principals?

12

**EVALUATOR TRAINING:** Does the system require and provide ongoing training for evaluators and principals?

13

**SYSTEM REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** Is there regular review of the evaluation system purposes, components, processes, and outcomes?

This resource, along with additional resources and tools framed by the 13 *Key Features*, can be downloaded for free at <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/effectiveprincipals>.

For more on strategies to develop principals, see the report: Integrated Leadership Development Initiative. (2010). *Effective principals for california schools – Building a coherent leadership development system*. San Francisco, CA: California Comprehensive Assistance Center, WestEd. <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/1020>.

## Notes

(1) Davis, S., Kearney, K., Sanders, N., Thomas, C. & Leon, R. (2011 June). *The policies and practices of principal evaluation: A review of the literature*. San Francisco, CA: California Comprehensive Assistance Center, WestEd. Available at <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/effectiveprincipals>

(2) The JCSEE established a framework to evaluate education personnel using four standards: 1. propriety standards that reflect legal and ethical considerations; 2. utility standards that guide evaluations to be informative, influential, and timely; 3. feasibility standards that support efficiency and ease of use; and 4. accuracy standards that support evaluations being technically adequate so they support sound judgments and decisions. From: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (2009). *The personnel evaluation standards: How to assess systems for evaluating educators* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Author.



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