

Measuring Principal Performance: How Rigorous Are Commonly Used Principal Performance Assessment Instruments?

Assessing school principal performance is both necessary and challenging. It is necessary because principal performance assessments offer districts an additional mechanism to ensure accountability for results and reinforce the importance of strong leadership practices. Principal performance assessments also provide central office administrators and principals, themselves, information with which to build professional learning plans and chart professional growth. Such assessments are also challenging because principals' practice and influence on instruction is sometimes not readily apparent.

In order to be used as a formative performance assessment, test results would have to be disaggregated, and their underlying constructs would need to be made transparent to readers. In addition, administrative and analytic control would have to be transferred to local educators .

Although standardized tests are used for certification purposes, other types of assessments are being used by school districts to ascertain principal performance and plan professional learning. Independent of standardized measures other assessments are being used formatively to judge principal performance. District performance assessments allow for formative feedback, but the measures vary in quality and rigor. This variance opens up the possibility that scores are inaccurate or performance assessments do not reflect research-based standards of the field. Superintendents and others who seek to improve principal performance assessment may select one or more of these measures or may develop and validate their own measures. Regardless of origin, assessments should be validated and reliable to ensure accuracy and applicability to principal performance.

This brief reports results of a scan of publicly available measures conducted by Learning Point Associates staff in 2009. The measures included in this review are expressly intended to evaluate principal performance and have varying degrees of publicly available evidence of psychometric testing. The review of this information is intended to inform decision makers' selection of job performance instruments used for hiring, performance assessment, and tenure decisions. This brief also addresses the importance of standards-based measures, the need for establishing reliability and validity, and the measures that are more widely accepted and psychometrically sound.

In conjunction with student achievement data, the performance assessments that are included in this review hold potential for raising principal accountability and identifying necessary changes in practice. However, principal performance assessment data will achieve desired ends only if principals and their supervisors view the data as credible and actionable and give assessment data considerable weight during principal performance evaluations. Close examinations of the principal performance evaluation process—its frequency and structure—would provide information about how assessments are used. In addition, this process would offer insight for assessment developers about how to structure assessment processes for better effects.

American Institute for Research. (2012, January). *Measuring principal performance: How rigorous are commonly used principal performance assessment instruments?* (Issue Brief). Naperville, IL: Christopher Condon & Matthew Clifford.