



Preparing Democratic Leaders for Quality Teaching and Student Success:
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Comparing Building Level Administrator Evaluation Instruments
to the ISLLC Standards and Current Research

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Abstract

Considerable attention has been directed toward standards for building level administrators. Studies have indicated lists of skills and responsibilities required for school reform and student achievement. Yet, surprisingly little research has been conducted to assess the performance of building level administrators in terms of successfully demonstrating these skills and responsibilities or meeting the standards. This study looks at several building level administrator evaluation instruments in Indiana and compares how well these instruments assess the administrator performance in relation to the nationally accepted ISLLC standards. The study also compares these instruments in terms of the research of leadership responsibilities that correlate with student achievement. The disturbing conclusions find little connection with neither the standards nor the research.

Objectives/Purposes of Paper

Despite the research and study that has been dedicated to identifying skills and responsibilities of building level administrators that are essential to student achievement, these are not indicated in many of the assessment and evaluation instruments used to indicate performance of building level administrators. Many university preparation programs for building principals focus on the ISLLC standards for building level administrators. Over forty states now require the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA) for state certification. However, when principals are evaluated at the corporation level, the assessment process does not seem to focus on the same skills. The dichotomy is that principals are still held accountable for student achievement.

This study examines several building level administration evaluation instruments to determine their effectiveness in relation to the skills and responsibilities needed for student achievement. The effectiveness will be determined by how the instruments are connected to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium six standards for building level administrators and how well the instruments are connected with current research relating to building level administration.

Perspectives/Theoretical Framework

Two critical educational acts established the importance of building level administration assessment. In 1996, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) organized the program, Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The consortium created what is now known as the ISSLC Standards for School Leaders. The intention of creating standards was to improve the practice of school leadership in terms of emphasizing the importance and responsibilities of effective school leaders (1996). In January 2002, No Child

Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law, establishing standards in each state and holding schools accountable for students to achieve these standards. Schools are held accountable to improving achievement of all students, so every school will be performing at proficient levels by 2014. NCLB established the expectation of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for schools, with consequences for failure to meet this level of accountability. Successive years of failing to reach AYP results in increased consequences of corrective action, restructuring ,measures, public school choice, supplemental services, staff replacement, decreased local management authority, and ultimately either a state takeover or placement under private management.

Studies in respect to building-level administration have supported the correlation between school leadership and student achievement. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) looked at over 5,000 articles as well as information from 2,802 schools between the years, 1978-2001. This mega-analysis was based on 69 studies of building leadership and its relation to student achievement (2005). They found correlation of leadership to student achievement of .25. Through this mega-analysis, they identified twenty-one building-level administration responsibilities that correlate with student achievement. The identified responsibilities include:

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|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Affirmation | 13. Knowledge of Curriculum,
Instruction, and Assessment |
| 2. Change Agent | 14. Monitoring/Evaluating |
| 3. Contingent Rewards | 15. Optimizer |
| 4. Communication | 16. Order |
| 5. Culture | 17. Outreach |
| 6. Discipline | 18. Relationships |
| 7. Flexibility | 19. Resources |
| 8. Focus | 20. Situational Awareness |
| 9. Ideals/Beliefs | 21. Visibility |
| 10. Input | |
| 11. Intellectual Stimulation | |
| 12. Involvement in Curriculum,
Instruction, and Assessment | |

The Marzano, Waters, and McNulty study carefully evaluated an earlier study conducted by Cotton (2003) who identified twenty-five principal behaviors that were related to student achievement.

Cotton's 25 Variables:

1. Safe and orderly environment
2. Vision and goals focused on higher levels of student learning
3. High expectations for student learning
4. Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance
5. Visibility and accessibility
6. Positive and supportive climate
7. Communication and interaction
8. Emotional and interpersonal support
9. Parent and community outreach and involvement
10. Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions
11. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment
12. Collaboration
13. Instructional leadership
14. Ongoing pursuit of higher levels of student learning
15. Norm of continuous improvement
16. Discussion of instructional issues
17. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers
18. Support for teachers' autonomy
19. Support for risk taking
20. Professional development opportunities and resources
21. Protecting instructional time
22. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings
23. Use of student progress for program improvement
24. Recognition of student and staff achievement
25. Role modeling

A study by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) produced an estimated correlation between leadership and student achievement of .17 and .22. Leithwood and colleagues concluded classroom instruction was the most important factor in student achievement, followed by leadership.

The work of other theorists has supported many of these skills and responsibilities indicated in the above studies. Carter (2000) in his study of high-performing, high poverty schools identifies common traits of principals in terms of being free. This freedom includes their ability to manage resources and personnel. Principals were flexible and innovative. The vision includes setting high goals and expectations for student achievement. Elmore (2000) emphasizes that leaders must understand importance of knowing and understanding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Schmoker (2006) discusses the importance of leaders being in the classrooms and having knowledge and involvement in the curriculum and instruction of students. Dufour and Eaker (1998) express the importance of the principal in developing a professional learning community. Critical elements are developing a vision and mission, creating change, and working within the curriculum. Hoy and Hoy (2003) discuss the instructional leader in the role of assessing and changing school culture.

The role of the building-level administrator's leadership has been recognized as being important in student achievement by many leading educational leadership researchers and theorists. A special task force on the principalship noted that principals must serve as leaders for student learning. Principals must analyze and use data to encourage excellence and focus all stakeholders on the goal of raising student performance (Leadership for Student Learning, 2000). Bolman and Deal (1997) noted that principals must have a clear vision, a strong knowledge base, have highly developed communication skills, an enlightened cultural sensitivity, and a deep commitment to educational outcomes. In their publication, *School Leadership That Works: From Research To Results*, Marzano, McNulty, and Waters wrote that "given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective school principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school." (2005, p. 6).

While research of building -level administrator instruments is limited, some important studies have been done in this area. The work of Lashway (2003) is significant. His research conducted in California found that most instruments were “home-grown and consisted mainly of a form of a checklist. While he agrees that the ISLLC standards do form a creditable foundation for building-level evaluation, building-level administration evaluation is difficult because of the nature of the position makes the work very multifaceted and vague. He also noted that principals’ assessments are often late and unhelpful. He called them often an “administrative bother.”

Langlois and McAdams (1992) noted the evaluation process for administrators should be based on best practices and research that support successful schools. The two principal purposes for evaluation should be quality assurance and professional development Danielson & McGreal (2000) stated that the main goal of a building-level evaluation should contain suggestions to help the principal improve performance. They also stated that the two primary purposes for evaluation should be quality assurance and professional development. Reeves (2004) was alarmed that evaluations used to evaluate administrators did not meet the expectations of principals in terms of the need to lead school reform and the leadership skills that today’s principals are expected to possess.

Portin, Feldman, and Knapp (2006) found accumulated evidence that demonstrates a correlation between school administrator’s action and student achievement. Their study also noted that the evaluation of school administrators has changed significantly in the last decade. They stated the process had changed from using simple evaluation instruments such as a checklist of behaviors, to an evaluation process tied to student achievement due to the ongoing trend of accountability at all levels of performance. As this Indiana study will indicate, this is not true, at least for Indiana. Reeves (2004) noted that although more than two dozen states and

many school systems claim to have adopted the ISLLC standards, many of their administrator evaluation systems fail to implement those standards.

DiPaola & Stronge, (2001) discuss the three most common evaluation models used today. These are evaluations that focus on global judgment through narrative reports, judgment driven by criteria using rating forms; management by objectives, performance contracting and duties based evaluation, and judgment driven by data using student outcomes and school accreditation.

While the ISLLC standards for building administrators have been widely used as guidelines for licensing and indicators of performance, the standards themselves have been subjected to criticism. This is best described by Waters and Grubb (2004).they described the ISLLC standards have been criticized by some educators as lacking of depth, breadth, and research. In 2003, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted their own study of principal leadership. Their findings became the basis for another leadership assessment instrument, the *Balanced Leadership Framework*. Supporters of the *Balanced Leadership Framework* claim that the ISLLC standards do not adequately reflect the need for school leaders to have an understanding of the change process. They contend that the *Balanced Leadership Framework* provided additional insights into the knowledge and skills essential to effective school change leadership. They also sight the instrument's effectiveness in describing the administrator's leadership responsibilities in managing first-order and second order change. Their findings identify 17 leadership practices that are not evident in the ISLLC standards and by offering additional insights into school leadership.

Methodology

This is a qualitative case study. The study involves assessing the administrative evaluation instruments from 41 Indiana school corporations by comparing the skills and responsibilities listed on the instruments to the ISLLC standards for building-level administrators and those skills and responsibilities found in current research and literature. The various instruments for evaluation are either in the format of a checklist of skills rated on a scale, a narrative format responding to a list of skills and/or responsibilities, a goals-oriented format, or a combination of two or more of the formats.

To determine if an evaluation instrument relates to an ISLLC standard, the listed skill or responsibility contained in the instrument is compared to the various dispositions of each standard. If a disposition is contained in the instrument then instrument is determined to assess that standard. If no dispositions are contained in the evaluation instrument, then the instrument is determined to have not covered that standard.

The instruments are then compared to the Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) twenty-one leadership responsibilities that correlate with student achievement. This study is selected because it is determined to be the most complete measure of the research reviewed. The complexity of the mega-analysis analyzed more data than all other studies. Also a cross-reference of this study with others indicate that nearly all the skills or responsibilities found in other studies are contained in the Marzano, Waters, and McNulty study.

To determine if an instrument contains recent related research, the instrument is compared to the twenty-one responsibilities. If the instrument is found to have 5 or more of the responsibilities, then it is determined that the instrument does relate to current research.

A third factor is considered. The researcher wanted to determine if the instrument is either a summative evaluation measure or a formative assessment. To assess this, the question is

asked if the instrument contains a goal setting process. The goal setting process is used to judge that the instrument is used in a formative measure. This indicates the instrument is devised to facilitate professional growth and improvement of the building-level administrator. If the goal setting process is not included in the instrument, then the instrument is considered a summative measure used to determine continued job status.

Results

The results of the study indicate a definite disconnect between the research that demonstrates those skills and responsibilities of building leadership that correlates with student achievement and the building-level evaluation instruments being used in schools. The results also indicate the lack of a relationship between the ISSLC standards for building-level administrators and the evaluation tool used to assess the same administrators.

The research determined that three of the 41 school corporations have no build-level administration instruments. One principal, a veteran of over 20 years in the corporation stated he has never been evaluated. Building administrators from the other two corporations commented they were basically given oral performance reviews that were based on the individual's job performance.

Of the remaining 38 instruments, eight are simply checklists of specific expectations as determined by the corporation, nine are a combination of a checklist with a specific area for comments or narrative statements, ending with a narrative explanation of overall performance. A total of five corporations use checklist combined with professional goals for the year, while another five corporations use a combination of checklist, narrative comments, and professional goals.

A narrative form is used by three corporations, listing general categories of expectations and leaving areas for comments. A goal setting evaluation instrument is used by three corporations. In these corporations the central office administration and the building administrator reach mutually agreed goals for the principal. These goals are to be related to the corporation mission and/or the school improvement plan.

Table 1: Types of Building-Level Evaluation Instruments

Type of Evaluation Instrument	Number of Corporations
Checklist Only	8
Checklist with Narrative	9
Checklist with Goals	5
Checklist with Narrative and Goals	5
Narrative Only	3
Goals Only	3
No Evaluation Instrument	3

All six of the ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards for building level administrators are supported and indicated as parts of the assessment process in only six of the 38 districts having instruments. All six of these districts were suburban corporations surrounding the Indianapolis metropolitan area. A seventh rural district, using a goal setting process for assessment required that goals be related to any of the six standards as needed.

A total of six districts include five of the six ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards in their instruments. Of these, three of fail to include the standard for management, while one district fails to include the standard for the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context and one district fails to include the standard for vision.

A total of nine corporations include four of the six ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards. Of these, six fail to include the standard for the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context, three omit the standards for ethics, three do not mention the standard for families and communities, two omit the standard for vision, and one corporation fails to include the standard for culture and the instructional program.

Only three of the six ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards are a part of the instruments in eight corporations. All eight omit the standards for ethics and the standard for the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context, three omit the standard for vision, two do not include the standard for culture and the instructional program and one does not include the standard for management.

Only two ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards are included in the instruments of three corporations, with one of the standards being the standard for management. The other standards included are the standard for vision, the standard for families and communities, and the standard for ethics (each mentioned in one corporation).

The building level evaluation instruments in three corporations included only one ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standard. In two of the corporations this is the standard of management. In the other corporation it is the standard of ethics.

In three corporations no ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards are specified. However, these corporations have goal oriented evaluation tools which allow for specific standards to be included.

Since all but three of the 38 corporations using instruments have some reference to the standard of management, this could indicate a preference of corporations to still place value on managerial skills above specific leadership skills.

Table 2: Inclusion of ISLLC Standards in Building-Level Evaluation Instruments

Number of ISLLC Standards	Number of Corporations
All Six	6
Five	6
Four	9
Three	8
Two	3
One	3
None*	3

*Three corporations use goal setting that could relate to one or more standards.)

In terms of relating to research, 15 of the instruments contain five or more of the 21 responsibilities contained in the Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) study. This means only 39% of the instruments in this study include elements of the current research of building-level administrators' responsibilities related to student achievement, while 23 or 61% have very little or no connection to current research.

Only 12 of the 38 instruments contained goal setting as a part of the evaluation process. While the researcher is aware that the instruments using narrative as a part of the evaluation could be used to set professional goals or for formative evaluation, there are no specific guidelines to using the narrative in this manner. Therefore the researcher determined that only the 12 goal setting instruments are used for formative evaluation. This means only 32% are used for professional development of the build-level administrator, while the remaining 26 or 68% of the instruments are used for summative evaluation or determination of job performance.

The ISLLC standards for building-level administrators have been in use since 1996. Indiana has adopted the standards as the professional standards for building-level administrators

and requires the SLLA (School Leaders Licensure Assessment) for licensure of all new building-level administrators. While the standards for accountability, especially with the implementation of NCLB in 2002, have required school corporations to make improvement and reform efforts in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the continual improvement and professional development of classroom teachers has been a vital part of this improvement, little has been accomplished in the assessment of administrators. Informal comments from administrators in the studied school corporations indicate that many of these instruments have been in use for multiple years without change. Even more appalling is the number of administrators who were licensed before the requirement of passing the SLLA examination that were not even aware of the six ISLLC and Indiana Professional Board standards for building-level administrators. Even a greater number have not been exposed to the current research of responsibilities and skills for administrators.

Importance of Study

This study indicates a need for schools to consider developing professional development and evaluation instruments for building level administrators that correlate with ISLLC standards. The study also demonstrates a need to use current research to create evaluation instruments for building level administrators. While the requirements of NCLB include basing curriculum and instructional methods scientifically research-based knowledge, a need exists to do the same with the evaluation process for administrators. The study also indicates that perhaps a need exists in terms of professional development for administrators in terms of the teaching how to meet the responsibilities that correlate with student achievement. Before an administrator can be assessed

in terms of the performance of a responsibility, it is essential the leader knows what the responsibility entails and the leadership practices that model the responsibility.

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