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ASCD Comments on the Draft ISLLC 2015 Model Policy Standards for Education Leaders May 29, 2015

Overall Comments

ASCD thanks the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Model Policy Standards for Educational Leaders. We believe the proposed ISLLC 2015 standards appropriately capture the need for education leaders to balance the dual roles of instructional leadership and operational management. They also encompass the responsibility of leaders to engage with multiple constituencies within their schools and broader communities.

We are concerned, however, about some missing elements—primarily ethical principles and equity— that were prominent components of the fall 2014 draft of the standards but are not fully addressed in this revised version. We understand the desire to condense and clarify the standards, and we believe that the previous stand-alone concepts of cultural sensitivity and continuous improvement have been suitably embedded into the seven remaining standards. However, the essential responsibilities of leaders to adhere to professional norms and ethics and to protect and fight for student equity are not adequately addressed in the current version of the standards. We strongly recommend more fully addressing these concepts in the final version of the ISLLC standards. We believe one solution could be to add a stand-alone standard that addresses ethical principles and professional norms and also includes a strong focus on equity. The equity component should clarify that education leaders must ensure all students have access to high-quality education opportunities and programming and must prevent and address student marginalization and limiting assumptions about gender, race, class, and special status.

Additionally, we recommend reordering and grouping the standards to provide a logical progression that enhances their understanding. As currently written, Standards 3 and 5 share a focus on supporting instructional staff and could be adjacent to each other. In addition, Standards 5 and 7 share a focus on efficient use of resources. Meanwhile, Standards 4 and 6 both address cultivating and engaging the entire school community.

More specific comments about the standards and their associated actions are below. It is worth noting that, from ASCD's perspective, the feedback platform (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9ND6RVT>) has unnecessarily and unfortunately constrained the comments process. In particular, both the fall and spring survey tools



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mainly offered “either/or” prompts and ranking questions that did not allow for extensive comments and ultimately encouraged respondents to prioritize the standards. In addition, the survey for this spring version of the standards provides just one short line for feedback outside of the multiple choice questions and doesn’t provide any indication of how much space is available for comment. Given the importance of these standards to education leaders and the field’s interest in their development, we would have preferred a more expansive survey to allow for more comprehensive input. To that end, we are providing a copy of these written comments via e-mail to CCSSO’s office.

Standard 1: Education leaders build a shared vision of student academic success and well-being.

ASCD Comments:

- This standard’s emphasis on the academic success and well-being of every student is appropriate, but the associated actions do not fully capture this comprehensive, child-centered vision. Action 3, for example, could expand on quality teaching and learning to also address child development and support.
- Action 2: The “gaps in existing expectations” language seems unnecessary. We recommend deleting.
- The need for continuous communication of the shared vision is missing. Communication is addressed at the beginning when the vision is being developed, but we believe it is just as important to emphasize the role of communication as the vision is being implemented and refined.

Standard 2: Education leaders champion and support instruction and assessment that maximizes student learning and achievement.

ASCD Comments:

- This standard’s description and actions are missing two important components. Standard 2 should address the importance of providing all students with a well-rounded curriculum in an array of subject areas. It should also specifically mention the importance of using a variety of assessment measures—including non-test measures—to assess student learning and well-being.
- Delete “new” in Action 2.
- Delete Action 5, which focuses on technology. We do not think technology should be specifically mentioned as a stand-alone action when a variety of



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instructional tools or decisions could similarly be highlighted here (textbooks, human capital, scheduling, etc.). We believe technology is more appropriately addressed in Standard 5.

- Action 7: Edit to say “Use assessments and their data in ways . . .”
- Action 8, which focuses on families and the community, is vague and confusing. We are not sure what is meant by the current language.

Standard 3: Education leaders manage and develop staff members’ professional skills and practices in order to drive student learning and achievement.

ASCD Comments:

- Action 3: We recommend editing the language to “determine areas of strength and improvement” so that the standards don’t reflect a purely deficit-based view of evaluation.
- In Action 5, we are not clear on what is meant by “disruptive forces.” Does it mean ensuring safe learning environments? Shielding teachers from community battles? Keeping politics at bay?
- Action 8: Upon initial review, it was very unclear whether this action refers to the leaders’ own professional growth plans. We recommend clarifying the language. For example, “. . . their own personal growth plan . . .” Making this the final action for this standard (following the action focused on growth plans for their staff members) would also help to clarify the intent.

Standard 4: Education leaders cultivate a caring and inclusive school community dedicated to student learning, academic success, and the personal well-being of every student.

ASCD Comments:

- We recommend tweaking the wording of the final action to “Monitor changes in perceptions of school climate among students, families, staff, and constituents and make improvements as appropriate.” This more appropriately emphasizes the leader’s role in helping to improve school climate.



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Standard 5: Education leaders effectively coordinate resources, time, structures, and roles to build the instructional capacity of teachers and other staff.

ASCD Comments:

- This standard seems to be an interesting blend of making effective use of resources as well as human capital. However, we believe the teacher leadership/distributed leadership component could be more transparent and further emphasized. We also wonder about this standard's relationship to Standard 7, which focuses on operations. Perhaps the effective use of resources could be embedded into Standard 7 and this standard could be more squarely focused on supporting human capital through the design of roles and structures.
- Action 2: Reword "Innovate the allocation of resources" to "Effectively and efficiently use resources." We also suggest breaking this action into two bullets—one that focuses on resources and another that focuses on roles and structures.
- Action 3 is unclear. What types of roles and structures? Should the emphasis be on staff making use of them or on those structures contributing to professional growth as well as student learning and well-being?

Standard 6: Education leaders engage families and the outside community to support and promote student success.

ASCD Comments:

- This standard should recognize that families are not just one of many external partners but rather that they are the most important stakeholders in terms of their children's success and achievement. This could be emphasized in the introductory paragraph and reinforced through the ordering of the bullets.
- It could be helpful to more clearly define external partners.
- One component that seems to be missing is the leaders' role in connecting students and their families with social services and support providers. This could be worked into the introduction as part of a definition of partners or it could be added as an action.



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Standard 7: Education leaders administer and manage operations efficiently and effectively.

ASCD Comments:

- This standard seems to overlap with the managing resources component of Standard 5. The two standards could be combined or portions of Standard 5 could be moved to this standard so that Standard 5 focuses on opportunities for distributed leadership/teacher leadership.
- Action 5: Change “other” to “additional.”