AN INTERIM REPORT ON PENNSYLVANIA'S FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP: **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

A new study analyzed data from the 2012/13 pilot of the Framework for Leadership (FFL), Pennsylvania's tool for evaluating the leadership practices of principals and assistant principals. Based on the FFL scores of 336 principals and 69 assistant principals evaluated by their supervisors in the 2012/13 school year, this interim report found that school leaders' scores from different categories of practices produced consistent assessments of their effectiveness. However, most scores were high, regardless of whether the school leaders made large or small estimated contributions to student achievement growth. These findings suggest that the FFL is based on a coherent definition of leadership quality, but more evidence is needed on whether this tool can distinguish effective school leaders from ineffective ones. The full report, *Measuring school leaders' effectiveness: An interim report from a multiyear pilot of Pennsylvania's Framework for Leadership*, is available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=343.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. Why was this study conducted?

Legislation enacted in Pennsylvania (Act 82 of 2012) created a new system for evaluating principals and assistant principals. Starting in school year 2014/15, half of a school leader's annual evaluation must be based on a supervisor's assessment of the school leader's leadership practices. (The other half must be based on measures of student achievement.)

As mandated by the legislation, the Pennsylvania Department of Education created the Framework for Leadership, a tool for supervisors to rate the quality of school leaders' practices. The department piloted the tool in school years 2012/13 and 2013/14 and requested an independent study of the pilot data to assess how well this tool measures the effectiveness of school leaders. This interim report is based on data from 2012/13.

2. What is the Framework for Leadership?

The Framework for Leadership (FFL) was developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to measure the quality of school leaders' practices. The FFL specifies 19 leadership practices on which each school leader is rated by an administrator—such as a superintendent or assistant superintendent—who supervises that school leader. On each practice, a school leader can receive a rating of distinguished (3 points), proficient (2 points), needs improvement (1 point), or failing (0 points).

The 19 practices are grouped into four categories: (1) strategic/cultural leadership, (2) systems leadership, (3) leadership for learning, and (4) professional and community leadership. School leaders also receive an overall rating for each category. The ratings that supervisors assign are supposed to be based on evidence submitted by the school leaders and the supervisors' direct observation of the leaders' practices.

3. Why was it important to gather evidence on the accuracy of the Framework for Leadership?

Analyzing data from the pilot of the Framework for Leadership can help education officials in Pennsylvania refine and improve this evaluation tool before it is used in formal evaluations of school leaders.

KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS FROM THE STUDY

4. What strength of the Framework for Leadership did this study find?

The strength of the Framework for Leadership (FFL) is that different parts of the tool were consistent with each other in producing conclusions about a school leader's effectiveness. School leaders who earned higher scores in one category of leadership practices also tended to earn higher scores in the other categories. This finding suggests that different parts of the FFL are connected by a coherent definition of leadership quality.

5. What shortcomings of the Framework for Leadership did this study find?

This study identified two shortcomings of the Framework for Leadership (FFL):

i. *FFL scores did not differ much among school leaders.* Most ratings were high. On specific leadership practices, supervisors rated principals and assistant principals as proficient or distinguished 95 percent of the time and as needing improvement in the remaining 5 percent. Failing ratings were extremely rare. In contrast, prior research has shown that principals differ considerably in their effectiveness at raising student achievement.

ii. *FFL scores were not associated with estimates of school leaders' contributions to student achievement growth.* In this pilot phase, the FFL did not successfully distinguish between school leaders who were more effective in raising student achievement and those who were less effective in doing so. School leaders with larger estimated contributions to student achievement growth did not, on average, receive higher FFL scores than school leaders with smaller estimated contributions to student achievement growth.

6. Is the Framework for Leadership any more or less accurate than other tools for rating school leaders?

It is unknown whether other tools are more or less accurate than the Framework for Leadership. For nearly all school leader evaluation tools, there have been no studies documenting how well those tools indicate school leaders' contributions to student achievement growth. The few tools that have been examined have not been shown to be consistently associated with principals' contributions to student achievement growth. Moreover, there is no prior analysis of how accurately school leader evaluation tools measure assistant principals' contributions.

7. What lessons can be drawn from the study findings to improve the Framework for Leadership?

Since the range of principals' evaluation scores was so limited, the Pennsylvania Department of Education may need to provide more specific guidance on how to determine ratings. For example, the department could provide concrete examples of the quantity and quality of evidence that would merit each possible score for every specific leadership practice. These examples could set a higher standard for scoring well than the standards that supervisors used in 2012/13.

In addition, more evidence is needed on how well the Framework for Leadership (FFL) can identify effective and ineffective school leaders. This study found that FFL scores were not related to school leaders' contributions to student achievement growth in 2012/13; however, achievement growth does not have to be the only point of comparison. The department could obtain additional measures of school leaders' performance, such as anonymous ratings by teachers, to determine whether these other measures can corroborate school leaders' FFL scores.

STUDY DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS, AND STAKEHOLDERS

8. Who participated in this study?

A total of 336 principals and 69 assistant principals were evaluated in the 2012/13 pilot study. These school leaders came from 344 schools spread across 146 school districts and other local education agencies. Most school districts in the study were required to participate because they received funds from the federal Race to the Top program. In addition, schools receiving federal School Improvement Grants to implement a transformation model of improvement were required to participate, and some school districts voluntarily selected schools to participate.

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9. Who sponsored this study?

This study was sponsored by the Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic, an organization established by the U.S. Department of Education to help states and districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region use data and research to improve students' academic outcomes.

10. Who conducted this study?

Mathematica Policy Research conducted this study as a subcontractor to ICF International, which operates the 2012–2017 Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic.

11. What was the Pennsylvania Department of Education's role in this study?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education requested this study to help it refine and enhance the Framework for Leadership (FFL). The department also provided the data (FFL scores and other administrative data on students and school leaders) used in this study. The department did not fund the study, conduct the analysis, or contribute to the report.

12. What were the limitations of this study?

This study had three primary limitations:

i. All measures of school leaders' contributions to achievement growth were based on student outcome measures from state tests. Due to the lack of data, this study did not examine whether Framework for Leadership (FFL) scores reflect school leaders' contributions to nontest outcomes (such as students' creativity and character).

ii. Although this study developed a new analytic method for measuring school leaders' contributions to student achievement growth (as a point of comparison for FFL scores), there is not yet a clear consensus among researchers on the best approach to measuring these contributions.

iii. The sample size of the 2012/13 pilot was not large enough to produce very precise estimates of the relationships between FFL scores and school leaders' contributions to student achievement growth. Findings may change in the next pilot phase, when more data will be available.

FUTURE STEPS

13. What comes next?

Data from the 2013/14 pilot year of the Framework for Leadership (FFL) will be analyzed in a similar fashion to determine how well FFL scores measure school leaders' effectiveness. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has projected more participants in 2013/14, which will permit more precise analyses. In addition, data will be available on how persistently students stay enrolled in high schools, so further analyses will assess how closely FFL scores are associated with high school leaders' contributions to students' enrollment persistence. A final report on the findings from school years 2012/13 and 2013/14 is scheduled to be released in 2015.