January 2016   **Overview**

All leadership preparation candidates seeking principal/assistant principal licensure in Massachusetts must meet state performance assessment requirements. To ensure that candidates do so, the Commonwealth is supporting the development of the Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL). The PAL assessment system is designed to provide clear evidence of a candidate's readiness for an initial school leadership position and, also, evidence for preparation programs on a candidates' performance. The system builds on new Commonwealth regulations for preparation program approval. Finally, the assessment system is aligned with other Commonwealth leadership development efforts to support and evaluate principals and assistant principals.

The tasks that comprise the PAL system are aligned to the revised Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership, approved by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in December 2011. The system is also aligned to the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval regulations (603 CMR 7.00) which were amended and approved by the Board on June 26, 2012. (For additional information see http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2012-06/item4.html; see also Appendix A, which provides the links to websites containing relevant state policy resources.)

PAL is also aligned with the national performance assessment requirements of the Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC), as enumerated in their national accreditation program standards (http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ELCC-Building-Level-Standards-2011.pdf), and the national educational leadership policy standards, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 standards, http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_2008.pdf.

The PAL Assessment Tasks

PAL is a performance assessment for which candidates demonstrates their leadership knowledge and skills by setting direction for school improvement, creating a professional learning culture among school staff, supporting individual teacher development, and engaging families and community in improving student learning. These are the four tasks:

Task 1: Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement.

Task 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture.

Task 3: Leadership in Observing, Assessing and Supporting Individual Teacher

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Effectiveness.

Task 4: Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement.

Each task is divided into four components of leadership action that reflect the cycle of leadership inquiry and learning, as shown on Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Components of Leadership Action
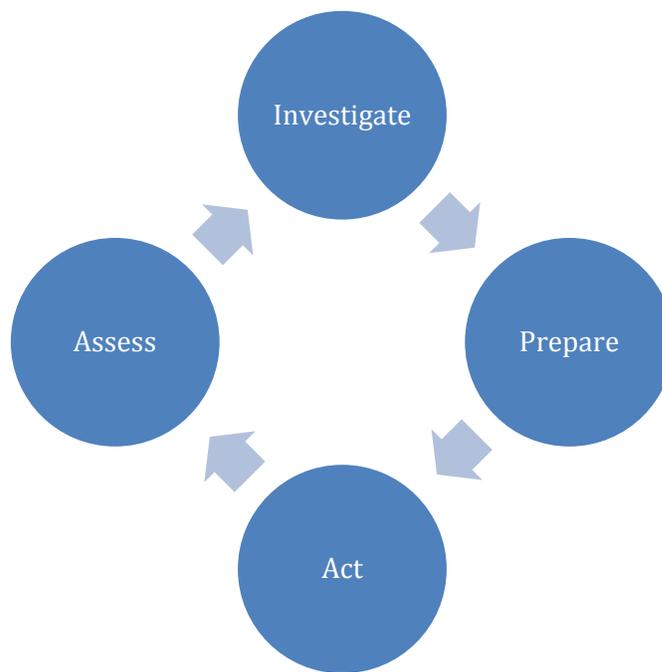
For each task, candidates will submit artifacts, other documents, and commentaries as evidence of planning, implementing, and analyzing leadership practices and engagement of others in improving student learning. They will all be considered part of the assessment.

<u>Artifacts</u>

The artifacts represent authentic work completed by the candidate and work groups formed for each task. They can include plans, proposals, reports, video clips of observations and post-observation feedback, memos and other media to demonstrate work performed.

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Other Documents

Other documents can include supporting materials used by the candidate and work groups to complete each task, such as student performance data, school and district demographic information, observation guides and rubrics, meeting agendas and minutes, school vision statements, strategic plans and improvement plans, curriculum guides and program information.

Commentaries

Commentaries describe the candidate's leadership skills in performing the work and explain their choices, analyses, and reasoning, drawing on artifacts and other documents. Further, they analyze what leadership lessons were learned from undertaking each task and how their skills can be improved.

Evaluation Criteria

The evidence submitted will be judged according to five primary components of leadership practice:

1.   Setting direction for school improvement.
2.   Creating a professional learning culture among staff.
3.   Supporting individual teacher development.
4.   Engaging families and community in improving student learning.
5.   Analyzing leadership practices.

There are 13 rubrics with 28 indictors all on a four-point performance scale: beginning, developing, performing and exceeding. The blinded work is scored by independent trained scorers through a secure on-line information management system, ShowEvidence.

PAL Development Process

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has worked in partnership with Bank Street College of Education to design PAL. To support this effort, lead project staff from Bank Street College and key consultants formed the MA-PAL development leadership team. The team in turn brought together a group of national leadership and performance assessment experts, representatives from a number of Massachusetts preparation programs and pathways, and K-12 education leaders to work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop PAL. Team members serve on one of four committees: Design, Content Validity, Bias Review, and

Technical Advisory.

The development of the PAL system consists of the following multi-stage process:

Stage 1: Design

The first stage comprised the drafting of possible performance assessment tasks, work products and rubrics that reflect the authentic work of school leaders. This involved the review of state and national leadership preparation standards and current research on principal effectiveness and school improvement. The Design Committee then generated possible tasks and work products and reviewed the nature, quality, and feasibility of each. The Content Validity Committee and Bias Review Committee reviewed the draft tasks and work products to ensure their relevance and fairness. The design team then created draft rubrics to score candidate work products and created a web-based system for candidates to upload their completed work products and for scorers to evaluate them.

Stage 2: Pilot Study

In the PAL pilot study, candidates were asked to complete just one task to test its feasibility and usefulness and to generate results to help set scoring benchmarks and exemplars. Candidates were recruited through their preparation programs or through website enrollment. They were assigned one task to complete, which was scored by trained scorers, who were recruited and trained throughout the spring. Candidates, scorers, preparation program faculty and the three review committees, provided feedback on the tasks, work products and rubrics and assessment infrastructure. After the pilot was completed, the performance tasks, work products, and rubrics for scoring, as well as the assessment system and materials were revised.

Stage 3: Field Test

For the field test, all leadership candidates (from preparation programs and other pathways) were required to complete all four tasks. The field test enabled the development team to evaluate and refine the tasks and assessment system for statewide implementation. Scorer recruitment and training continued throughout the year to score the four tasks submitted by 425 candidates between September 1, 2014 and May 15, 2015. The development team analyzed the task outcomes, solicit feedback from candidates, pathways, and scorers, and complete another content analysis of the task products for quality, relevance and rigor, as well as assessment of the feasibility, ease of use, and reliability. The team also evaluate the results for possible bias among candidates and pathways.

4: Technical Advisory Committee and Standards Setting Committee

In Fall 2015, the development team convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of psychometricians to review the validity and reliability results of the field trial and evaluated the factor quality of the component tasks as a measure of initial school leadership. The team next convened a Standards Setting Committee which identified performance benchmarks for each task to differentiate initial school leader candidate readiness (from not yet ready) and to recommend threshold scores for each task as recommended be done by the TAC. The TAC and Standards Setting Committee recommendations were then given to the Commonwealth's Commissioner to set the overall score and threshold scores for the assessment.

Stage 5: Implementation

Starting September 2015, Massachusetts has fully implemented the PAL as the performance assessment requirement for licensure, funded through candidate fees. Candidates must meet or exceed the performance standards expectations (formally released in December 2015) as part of the Commonwealth's licensure requirements. Bank Street College's PAL development team, along with ShowEvidence, is supporting the PAL system throughout this initial implementation year.

Table 1: Summary of the Four PAL Assessment Tasks

Task 1: Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement

This task asks candidates to focus on two pillars of highly effective schools: the instructional program (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) and school culture (student culture, professional culture, and the culture of family engagement and community involvement). The candidate develops a school vision and improvement plan for one school-based priority area. Specifically, the candidate collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data on student performance, student and teacher relationships, and student and school culture; selects a priority area for focus; documents existing school programs, services, and practices; and develops a set of goals, objectives, and action strategies with input from school leaders and key stakeholder groups. The candidate also presents and receives feedback on the plan from relevant stakeholders.

Task 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture

In this task, a candidate demonstrates the capacity to foster a professional learning culture to improve student learning by working with a small group of teachers using structured learning activities to improve the teachers' knowledge and skills. The candidate supports teachers in improving an existing curriculum, instructional approach, or assessment strategy. The candidate also documents the process, teachers' teamwork, and changes in practice.

Task 3: Leadership in Observing, Assessing and Supporting Individual Teacher Effectiveness

In this task, a candidate demonstrates instructional leadership skills by planning for a teacher observation, conducting the observation, analyzing the observation and student performance data, providing feedback, and planning support for an individual teacher. A candidate also documents the observation cycle as well as teacher feedback on the quality and use of the process.

Task 4: Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement

Here, a candidate gathers information related to family engagement and community involvement needs, develops a proposal, and implements one component of it with work group support. A candidate works collaboratively with a work group representing school leadership, staff, families and community members, and students (where appropriate) to select a priority area based on evidence of student strengths, interests, and needs. The candidate, with the work group, develops a comprehensive improvement proposal and implements and monitors the outcomes for one strategy.