



July 14, 2017

Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Board of Regents, Room 110 EB
Albany, New York 12234

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Dear Commissioner Elia:

Thank you for considering Council of School Supervisors and Administrators' input on the stellar work of the Principal Preparation Project.

Here are our thoughts on the three issues listed in your earlier correspondence:

Do beliefs and recommendations move in the proper direction?

The beliefs and some of the recommendations do move in the right direction. In general, they are practical, detailed, geared toward continuous improvement, and begins to address important trends in diversity, which in this context refers to the growing racial and ethnic diversity of our students and the problematic decline of diversity in our principal pool.

We believe first-year principals will benefit from more support and guidance, not more evaluations, since there is already a mechanism in place to evaluate principals.

The "Continuous Improvement and Change Management," clause points out not only the importance of having a change model for schools, but also the necessity that a school leader possess the skills and grace to handle the tensions that arise in a school building when said changes occur. The statement makes clear the importance of a school leader's emotional intelligence and how vital it is when navigating tense situations that develop when schools take a new academic direction. A school leader's emotional intelligence is vitally important to school success.



Will recommendations improve the preparation of and support for school building leaders?

Yes. The recommendations addressing internships, mentoring, and competency-based assessments are specific, measurable, appropriate, relevant and timely.

Let us address each in turn:

Internships should be available to assistant principals (or the career equivalent), be of high quality, and should take place at the school level (elementary, middle, and high school) the intern wishes to lead. The internship should be a year-long “residency” during which interns can observe numerous “master” school leaders at work. This will allow interns to receive basic supervisory experience prior to taking over a school.

Mentoring: Success in this area depends on the rigor of the screening process and the skills of those selected as mentors. Mentors must be consistent, credible, relevant, and have a demonstrated record of success as a principal. The mentor’s experience must also fit the mentee’s assignment. High-quality mentors can aid the preparation of aspiring principals and support current principals.

These criteria are critical to a successful mentoring program: selection, training, expectations, duties, mentor caseload, the process for matching mentee and mentor, establishment of a minimum monthly hours of contact between mentor and mentee, and guidelines concerning confidentiality.

There must also be formative feedback and continuous monitoring of the mentoring experience, summative evaluation when the year ends, and an ability to make mid-course corrections when needed should the mentor/mentee match require it.

Both internships and mentoring programs must have independent funding that does not come out of an individual school’s budget.

Competency: In New York State, CSA representatives and education practitioners have traditionally been involved in the creation of the School Building Leader (SBL) exam. The New York City Principals' Pool also screens and examines the leadership skills of aspiring principals. Creating a competency-based assessment for candidates (and their readiness for certification) will require a thoughtful consideration of whether a candidate has the required competencies or skills, which ideally should include:

- A vision, sense of mission, and ability to set and attain goals related to improving a school.
- Strong instructional leadership, including knowledge of curriculum, standards, and necessary assessments.
- Operational skills, including the ability to create and follow a budget, apply discipline when needed, etc.
- An ability to support teachers and develop effective teams.

These assessments should **not** be duplicative. We also note that the current recommendations address educators in their first year of service as a school building leader. We urge the NYSED to consider increasing much-needed support for current principals.



To conclude, CSA makes the following recommendations:

1. The creation of a full-time, year-long, paid internship across the P-12 grade levels to be funded independently of a school's budget.
2. The creation of a uniform, standardized internship evaluation process.
3. Expanded efforts to recruit, train and retain minority school leaders to reflect the changes in the student body.
4. Ensure that principals, depending on their need, are mentored or coached during their second year.

We look forward to working with NYSED in this exciting redesign of leadership requirements for our public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark F. Cannizzaro'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Mark Cannizzaro
Executive Vice President