

**PSEL 2015 *and*
Promoting Principal
Leadership
for the Success
of Students with
Disabilities**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND USER GUIDE

In October 2015, the Council of Chief State School Officers released the [Professional Standards for Educational Leaders \(PSEL\)](#) to ensure district and school leaders are able to improve student achievement and meet new higher expectations. The PSEL 2015, formerly known as the Interstate School Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, were approved by the National Policy Board for Education Administration and outline foundational principles of educational leadership that research shows contribute to student learning. The standards are student-centric and designed to help principals lead inclusive schools that meet the needs and realize the potential of all students.

Effective leadership is particularly important for students with disabilities. When a principal cultivates a school environment where all students feel safe, supported, and included, students with disabilities and other struggling learners are able to thrive. In years past, principals primarily focused on complying with various program requirements, laws, and regulations related to educating students with disabilities. Today that focus has expanded beyond compliance to one that taps principals' instructional capacity to ensure that students with disabilities achieve and are ready for college and careers in the 21st century. But how does a principal transform a school into an inviting place that promotes learning and growth for students with disabilities? What key competencies are necessary to lead an inclusive school where all students succeed?

To answer these questions, CCSSO and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Evaluation, Development, and Reform (CEEDAR) convened the Principal Competencies Advisory Group in January 2016. The group comprised principals, leaders from state and local education agencies, members of the higher education community, and representatives of professional associations that serve educational leaders. Together, they conceptualized, developed, and organized this document, *PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities*. CCSSO shared a draft of the document and discussed it publicly at both the National and State Collaboration for Educator Effectiveness Summit and the CEEDAR Convening in June 2016. All comments and feedback were considered in the final version.

PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities is part of a suite of guidance documents created to stimulate a more nuanced conversation about school leadership and strengthening the instructional capacity of principals. Along with the aforementioned PSEL 2015, these include [2015 Model Principal Supervisor Standards](#), and CCSSO's *Our Responsibility, Our Promise* and *Promises to Keep*. The latter two publications outline how states can transform educator preparation so teachers and principals are better equipped to help all students achieve. The suite also includes the forthcoming National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards from the National Policy Board for Education Administration. These standards align directly with the PSEL 2015 and inform the preparation of aspiring educational leaders and the process by which preparation programs seek accreditation.

DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

In creating this document, the working group examined the PSEL 2015 to pinpoint school leadership practices that are particularly important for improving achievement and outcomes for students with disabilities. Section 1 looks in-depth at the PSEL 2015, highlighting aspects of leadership practice in each of the ten standards that are relevant to educating students with disabilities. Section 1 also includes examples of principals who are putting these leadership practices into action to foster inclusion in their schools. Section 2 reviews the research on principal leadership for students with disabilities to identify and describe the key competencies (the skills and knowledge) that are necessary for leading inclusive schools. Section 3 concludes with recommendations for state education agencies (SEA) to develop and strengthen these competencies in principals so they can better serve students with disabilities and lead inclusive schools.

APPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

SEAs recognize their responsibility to promote effective leadership practices that support students with disabilities. This document outlines policies and practices to this end:

State chiefs and their leadership teams can:

1. Set clear goals and expectations for principal leadership with an explicit focus on improving outcomes for students with disabilities.
2. Adopt and promote the PSEL 2015 and highlight aspects that are most relevant for inclusive school leadership and supporting students with disabilities.
3. Promote coherence among various programs and policies, including those that support leaders and students with disabilities (i.e., through state plans under the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], IDEA and State Systemic Improvement Plans [SSIPs]).
4. Leverage new ESSA funding flexibilities to support inclusive school leadership (e.g., Title II optional 3% set-aside).

SEA educator effectiveness staff can:

1. Improve educator preparation programs to ensure graduates can meet the needs of students with disabilities.
2. If applicable, establish approval criteria for preparation programs that specify the content, coursework, and field experiences necessary for serving students with disabilities.
3. Provide principals with meaningful and effective evaluations, support, and professional development focused on creating inclusive schools.

4. Consider developing and using micro-credentials to ensure principals pursue professional development opportunities that hone their skills to support students with disabilities.

SEA special education directors/staff can:

1. Build awareness among district and school leaders of the nature of disability and the needs of students with disabilities.
2. Collaborate with other SEA departments and programs to ensure effective, inclusive leadership development for district and school leaders.
3. Inform conversations and influence decisions related to improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

Regional service centers can:

1. Establish and support networks of LEAs, principal preparation programs, professional associations, and non-profit organizations to marshal resources and provide professional development opportunities that strengthen inclusive leadership.

Leader preparation programs can:

1. Apply the PSEL 2015 and the competencies that principals need to support students with disabilities to coursework and field experiences.
2. Share this document with faculty to deepen their understanding of the competencies required to lead inclusive schools.



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