Key Features of a Comprehensive Principal Evaluation System
The development of this resource was supported by the Integrated Leadership Development Initiative (ILDI), a state cross-agency partnership, that focuses on guiding and supporting leader development and improving conditions of leadership so that there are highly accomplished leaders in every district and school in California.

This work is also supported by the California Comprehensive Center, a partnership of WestEd, American Institutes for Research, and School Services of California, through funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Pr/Award Number S283B050032. It does not necessarily reflect the views of policies of the U.S. Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.


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Drawn from a comprehensive review of research and professional literature on principal evaluation, 13 Key Features were identified as representing elements critical in establishing a comprehensive principal evaluation system. The Key Features were validated through (1) focus groups of superintendents, human resource administrators, principals, and professors of education administration, and (2) numerous conversations with individual practitioners, experts, and researchers in K-12 and higher education, instructional leadership, and personnel evaluation. In addition, the Key Features were reviewed against the personnel evaluation standards described in the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) Framework 2009.

The Key Features are organized around three evaluation questions:

**Why evaluate principals?** The Key Features addressing this question are:
1. Clear Purpose
2. Mission Alignment
3. Professional Growth
4. District Policy

**What should be evaluated?** The Key Features addressing this question are:
5. Clear Expectations
6. Leadership Research and Standards
7. Principal Participation

**How should principals be evaluated?** The Key Features addressing this question are:
8. Multiple Forms of Data
9. Technically Sound Information
10. Ongoing Processes
11. Adaptable Procedures
12. Evaluator Training
13. System Review and Accountability

The Key Features can be used for two purposes:

- **Research:** To provide a basis on which to study district implementation and resources in support of these features (and their possible connection to improving student outcomes).
- **Practice:** To provide a basis from which school districts look at the systems, practices, and support framing their principal evaluation systems.

By serving both purposes, the Key Features support the development of coherent principal evaluation systems. Using the Key Features also facilitates collaboration among various stakeholder groups working to improve how principals are evaluated.
**Why Evaluate?**

1. **Clear Purpose:** Why does the district evaluate principals?

2. **Mission Alignment:** Does the evaluation system advance the school and district mission to improve teaching and learning for all students?

3. **Professional Growth:** Does the evaluation system promote and support the professional development and growth of the principal?

4. **District Policy:** Does the district’s organizational structure and its supporting policies and procedures support and guide the evaluation system?

**Evaluate What?**

5. **Clear Expectations:** Does the evaluation system provide clear expectations for principal performance and are these consistently and clearly communicated?

6. **Leadership Research and Standards:** Is the evaluation system supported by research and does it address important national and state professional standards?

7. **Principal Participation:** Do principals participate in setting and prioritizing their individual professional goals and objectives in relation to district and school goals?
How to Evaluate?

**MULTIPLE FORMS OF DATA:** Does the evaluation system use multiple forms and sources of data (evidence) that include input from a range of people who work with the principal?

**TECHNICALLY SOUND INFORMATION:** Does the evaluation system provide technically sound information for making valid, reliable, fair, and defensible decisions?

**ONGOING PROCESSES:** Does the evaluation system include opportunities to gather and review evaluation evidence through ongoing and regular interactions between the evaluator and principal?

**ADAPTABLE PROCEDURES:** Is the system sufficiently flexible and adaptable to adjust for variable school and community contexts, needs, and unique circumstances faced by principals?

**EVALUATOR TRAINING:** Does the system require and provide ongoing training for evaluators and principals?

**SYSTEM REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** Is there regular review of the evaluation system purposes, components, processes, and outcomes?
This resource, along with additional resources and tools framed by the 13 Key Features, can be downloaded for free at http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/effectiveprincipals.


Notes


(2) The JCSEE established a framework to evaluate education personnel using four standards: 1. propriety standards that reflect legal and ethical considerations; 2. utility standards that guide evaluations to be informative, influential, and timely; 3. feasibility standards that support efficiency and ease of use; and 4. accuracy standards that support evaluations being technically adequate so they support sound judgments and decisions. From: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (2009). The personnel evaluation standards: How to assess systems for evaluating educators (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Author.