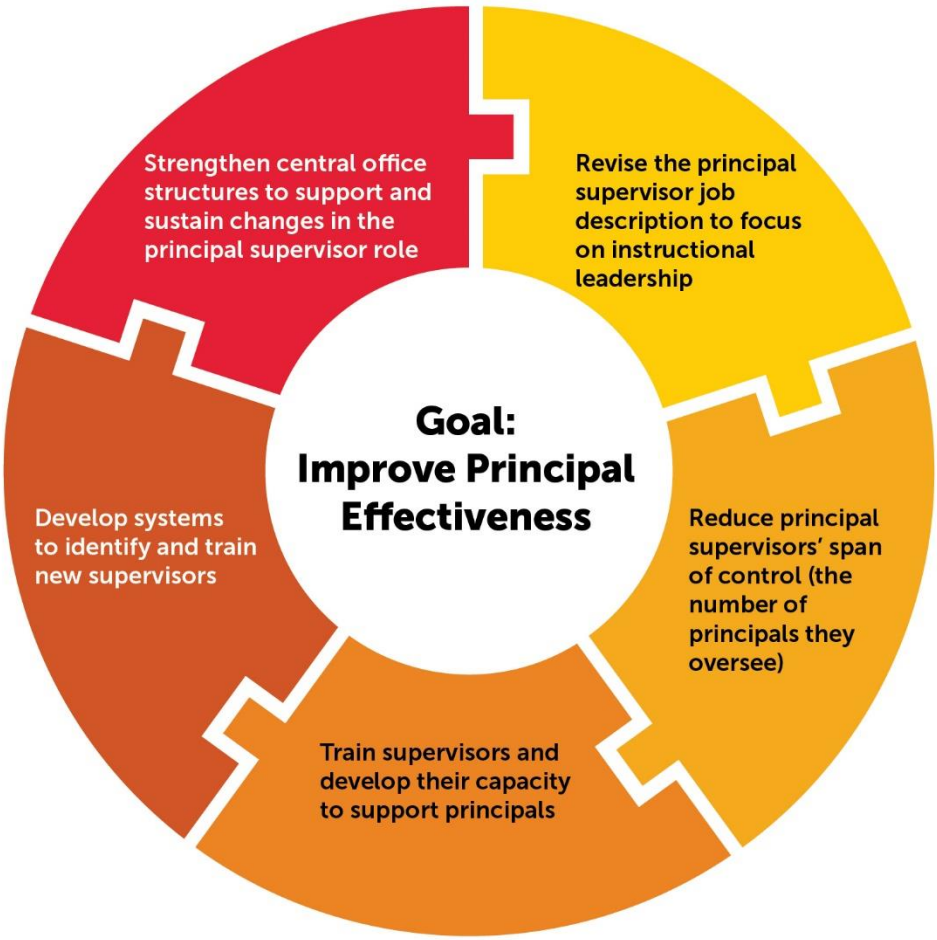
A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors

Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative



Ellen B. Goldring, Jason A. Grissom, Mollie Rubin, Laura K. Rogers, Michael Neel
Vanderbilt University, Peabody College

Melissa A. Clark
Mathematica Policy Research

JULY 2018

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors

Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative

Ellen B. Goldring, Jason A. Grissom,
Mollie Rubin, Laura K. Rogers, Michael Neel
Vanderbilt University, Peabody College

Melissa A. Clark
Mathematica Policy Research

VANDERBILT PEABODY COLLEGE

MATHEMATICA Policy Research

Commissioned by:
The Wallace Foundation®

JULY 2018

Suggested citation:
Goldring, Ellen B., Jason A. Grissom, Mollie Rubin, Laura K. Rogers, Michael Neel, and Melissa A. Clark. "A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors: Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative." New York: Wallace Foundation, 2018. Available at http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/A-New-Role-Emerges-for-Principal-Supervisors.aspx.

.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the contributions of many individuals. First and foremost, we are grateful for the cooperation of the central office staff, principal supervisors, and principals from the six school districts participating in the Principal Supervisor Initiative. We especially want to thank the district staff who facilitated our work: Jennifer Dull in Baltimore City Public Schools, Veda Hudge in Broward County Public Schools, Jenny Janovitz and Cynthia Fisher in Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Ruth Wright in Des Moines Public Schools, Douglas Jordan and Marcus Galbreath in Long Beach Unified School District, and Jennifer Fair in Minneapolis Public Schools.

We also thank The Wallace Foundation staff who have provided essential information about the initiative and thoughtful insights throughout the study. We particularly appreciate support and insights into the initiative from the Education Leadership Team, including Jody Spiro, Aiesha Eleusizov, Rochelle Herring, and Nicholas Pelzer, and expert guidance on the study from Elizabeth Ty Wilde, Ed Pauly, and Rachel Hare Bork.

We are grateful for input on the study design provided by members of the study's technical working group, which included Richard Murnane, Jeffrey Smith, Petra Todd, and Brenda Turnbull. The study has benefited greatly from their expertise. We also appreciate helpful input on the analysis from Susan Gates, Matthew Baird, and Benjamin Master.

The study has also benefited from the contributions of many people at Vanderbilt University and Mathematica Policy Research. At Vanderbilt, Susan K. Patrick, Sy Doan, and Christopher Marsicano provided thoughtful feedback on pilot surveys and Tammy Eidson provided crucial logistical support. From Mathematica, Moira McCullough provided insightful comments on the report, John Kennedy provided careful editing, and Sheena Flowers provided expert production support.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY xi

I. OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR INITIATIVE 1

A. The PSI: Background 2

B. The core components of the PSI 3

C. The districts in the PSI 4

D. The principal supervisor role before the PSI 5

E. Principal supervisors early in the PSI 5

F. Overview of this report 6

II. STUDY METHODOLOGY 7

A. Data on implementing the PSI 7

B. Analyses 9

III. REVISING THE JOB DESCRIPTION 11

A. All six districts began implementing the PSI by revising the job description 11

B. Revising the job description involved input from a variety of sources and stakeholders 11

C. Revising the job descriptions required changing other central office roles, identifying a balance between central office and school-based work, and defining principal support 14

IV. REDUCING SUPERVISORS' SPAN OF CONTROL AND ASSIGNING SUPERVISORS TO SCHOOLS 15

A. Most districts have reduced the span of control 15

B. Reducing the span of control was a quick and early win 15

C. Span of control reductions were largely complete by the third year of the initiative 16

D. Districts faced some challenges to reducing the span of control 17

E. Districts considered multiple factors in assigning supervisors to schools 18

F. Districts faced some challenges in allocating and assigning supervisors to schools 19

V. TRAINING AND DEVELOPING CAPACITY OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS 23

A. Training focused on high quality instruction and developing instructional leadership 25

B. Districts implemented both job-embedded and non-job-embedded structures of training 26

C. The role of technical assistance providers was central to developing quality-training approaches 28

D. Principal supervisors were generally satisfied with their training 28

E. Districts faced some challenges in implementing supervisor training programs 29

VI. THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR 31

A. Principal supervisors focused their work on principal support 31

B. Principal supervisors spent most of their time on instructional leadership 32

C. Principal supervisors developed principals' instructional leadership through walk-throughs, feedback, and coaching 36

D. Principal supervisors led principal networks and professional learning communities 39

E. Principal evaluation systems continued to develop to align with supervisors' changed roles 40

F. Districts and supervisors confronted challenges to changing the role 41

VII. DEVELOPING SYSTEMS TO IDENTIFY AND TRAIN NEW SUPERVISORS 43

A. Three districts have developed principal supervisor apprenticeship programs 43

B. Districts developed various approaches to select candidates for the apprenticeship program 43

C. Apprenticeship programs offered multiple types of training opportunities 44

D. Districts identified a number of benefits of apprenticeship programs 45

E. Districts faced some challenges in building a robust principal supervisor apprenticeship program 46

VIII. STRENGTHENING CENTRAL OFFICE STRUCTURES 49

A. Overview of central office structures 49

B. Central offices reorganized to support principal supervisors 50

C. Districts faced challenges to strengthening the central office 55

IX. CONCLUSIONS 59

A. Districts changed the principal supervisor role and enhanced school support more broadly 60

B. Districts faced ongoing challenges 60

C. Looking ahead: Areas for continued focus 61

REFERENCES 63

APPENDIX A A-1

TABLES

II.1. Number and roles of interview participants 8
II.2. Principal and principal supervisor survey response rates 9
IV.1. Average span of control and range in the PSI districts 15
IV.2. Supervisor primary assignment approaches to networks in the PSI districts, 2016–2017 school year 18
V.1. Timeline and content of principal supervisors' training, by district 24
V.2. Areas of emphasis in principal supervisor training, 2016–2017 school year 26
VIII.1. Central office organizational structures for supervisors in the PSI districts, 2016–2017 school year 49

FIGURES

I.1. Time periods covered in the three study reports 2
I.2. The five core components of the PSI 3
I.3. Positions held by principal supervisors immediately before becoming a supervisor in a PSI district 6
II.1. Implementation data collection timeline 7
IV.1. Percentage of principals with new supervisors from 2016 to 2017 school years 20
V.1. Supervisors' perceptions of training quality, 2017 29
VI.1. Supervisors' use of time, 2017 32
VI.2. Principal reports of the number of meetings with their supervisor at school in 2017 during a three-month period 33
VI.3. Supervisors' time spent in a typical week working with principals on instructional leadership and operations in the PSI districts, 2017 34
VI.4. Principals' reports of areas in which supervisors were main contact 35
VI.5. Principals' perceptions of approaches to supervisor feedback, 2017 38
VI.6. Principals' perspectives on the quality of district principal evaluation systems, 2017 41
VIII.1. Principal supervisors' perceptions of central office organization, 2016 and 2017 52
VIII.2. District support team structure 53
VIII.3. District liaison role structure 54
VIII.4. Principals' perceptions of central office orientation, 2016 and 2017 56

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, The Wallace Foundation launched the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI), a four-year, $24 million-dollar effort to redefine principal supervision in six urban school districts. The initiative sought to help districts transform a position traditionally focused on administration, operations, and compliance to one dedicated to developing and supporting principals to improve instruction in schools.

Six urban school districts participated in the Principal Supervisor Initiative:

- Broward County Public Schools, Florida
- Baltimore City Public Schools, Maryland
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Ohio
- Des Moines Public Schools, Iowa
- Long Beach Unified School District, California
- Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnesota

The initiative was motivated by an effort to increase student learning and achievement by improving principal effectiveness. Research has shown that strong principals are integral to strong schools and to raising the quality of teaching. Numerous studies have pointed to the importance of effective leaders for teacher satisfaction, teacher retention, school climate, parent engagement, and student achievement. Principal supervisors are a potential point of leverage for supporting and developing principals, but relatively few districts have invested in such efforts. The motivating hypothesis of the PSI is that changing the role of principal supervisors from overseeing administration and operations to providing instructional leadership can drive improvement in principal effectiveness.

The PSI includes five core components:

1. Revising the principal supervisors' job description to focus on instructional leadership
2. Reducing principal supervisors' span of control (the number of principals they oversee) and changing how supervisors are assigned to principals
3. Training supervisors and developing their capacity to support principals
4. Developing systems to identify and train new supervisors (succession planning)
5. Strengthening central office structures to support and sustain changes in the principal supervisor's role

The study of the PSI, conducted by researchers from Mathematica Policy Research and Vanderbilt University, will document districts' experiences implementing the initiative and examine the effects of the initiative on principals' performance. This first study report describes the emergence of a new role for principal supervisors in the six PSI districts, documenting districts' experiences with and lessons learned from the PSI from its inception in the 2014–2015 school year through spring 2017. A second report will describe the final year of implementation and examine the effects of the initiative on principals' performance. A third report will compare the principal supervisors' role in the six PSI districts with that in a national sample of urban districts, to learn how principal supervision in PSI districts differs from that in similar districts that were not part of the initiative.

In this report, we present analyses of data from semistructured interviews with central office personnel, principal supervisors, and principals, as well as data from surveys of supervisors and principals in each of the six PSI districts.

A. Overview of study findings: A new role for principal supervisors emerges

The six PSI districts demonstrated the feasibility of making substantial changes to the principal supervisor role, across all components of the initiative. The districts revised the job descriptions for principal supervisors, reduced the span of control, implemented new training programs, and restructured roles and responsibilities in the central office to support changes to the principal supervisor role.

These changes in the principal supervisor role laid the groundwork for changes in principal supervisors' day-to-day work with principals. Most principal supervisors now spend the largest share of their time in schools engaging in newly developed routines and practices, such as participating in classroom walk-throughs, coaching principals, and providing ongoing feedback. In some districts, they also work with assistant principals or school leadership teams. They focus less on administration and building operations than in the past. They also focus less on compliance activities, such as monitoring supplies and ensuring district and state forms are completed correctly and submitted on time. Principal supervisors also consistently meet with groups of principals to provide opportunities for collaborative learning.

1 Revising the principal supervisors' job description to focus on instructional leadership

Districts revised the job description of principal supervisors to focus heavily on developing instructional leadership and supporting principals.

Through their revisions to the principal supervisors' job description, districts articulated a new vision for the principal supervisor role. To inform the revised job descriptions, most districts relied heavily on the draft *Model Principal Supervisor Standards* (Council of Chief State School Officers 2015) and sought input from a mix of central office departments, senior-level district officials, current principal supervisors and principals, and external technical assistance providers.[1]

Changing the job description required shifting some responsibilities previously held by principal supervisors to other central office staff. As of the third year of the initiative, districts continued to wrestle with the redistribution of responsibilities formerly held by principal supervisors. This highlights a challenge other districts may face as they seek to make similar changes to the principal supervisor role.

[1] The Wallace Foundation supported the development of the *Model Principal Supervisor Standards*.

2 Reducing principal supervisors' span of control and changing how supervisors are assigned to principals

PSI districts reduced the number of principals each supervisor oversaw and created networks of principals to facilitate collaboration and small-group learning communities.

Districts reduced the number of principals assigned to each supervisor, which provided supervisors time to focus on developing and supporting principals as instructional leaders. Before the PSI, across the six districts, supervisors oversaw an average of 17 principals. Within the first three years of the initiative, the average span of control across all six districts decreased to 12 principals. The number of supervisors who reported that they oversaw too many principals declined in every district from 2016 to 2017.

Although most districts successfully reduced the average number of principals overseen by their supervisors, spans of control varied substantially among supervisors within districts. Districts discovered that the appropriate span might not be the same for all supervisors, depending on the characteristics of schools and principals in their networks. For instance, new principals might require more or differing supports relative to veteran principals.

Each supervisor oversaw a network of principals. Districts grouped principals into networks based on a combination of grade level, geography, school theme or focus, and, at times, by performance level. Districts typically matched supervisors strategically to networks according to their relevant experience and expertise. The networks facilitated collaboration among principals, enabling them to share practices and participate in professional development together.

Principals were able to spend more time interacting with supervisors because of the reduced spans of control and changes in network groupings. As a consequence, they reported developing more productive relationships with their supervisors than in the past. This change in the nature of the relationships between principals and supervisors was due not only to the quantity of time spent together, but also to the qualitative shift in the nature of their interactions, toward a greater focus on instructional leadership.

In the first years of the PSI, shifting supervisor assignments and hiring new supervisors led to instability in relationships between supervisors and principals. As districts finalize their supervisor rosters, we might expect more stable principal groupings and reduced supervisor turnover.

3 Training supervisors and developing their capacity to support principals

PSI districts developed systematic training programs to develop supervisors' skills.

Before the PSI, supervisors did not receive training specifically aimed at improving their capacity to support and develop principals as instructional leaders. By 2017, however, districts had demonstrated the benefits of targeted supervisor training to develop supervisors' capacity to support and coach principals. The supervisor training focused heavily on understanding and identifying high quality instruction and developing principals as instructional leaders, although

the primary focus varied by district. Supervisors especially valued job-embedded training approaches, such as one-on-one coaching and in-school peer observations with other supervisors.

Districts grappled with finding a balance for supervisors between spending time on training and spending time in schools. Although supervisor training ensures supervisors have the needed skills to support and develop principals, it takes away from time working directly with principals in schools. Districts must determine an appropriate balance between these two objectives.

Technical assistance providers played key roles in planning and facilitating principal supervisor trainings. Supervisors often reported that trainings drifted from their intended purpose, or were limited in quality when technical assistance providers were not present. This suggests that technical assistance from external providers may be an important component of effective training.

4 Developing systems to identify and train new supervisors (succession planning)

Some districts implemented apprenticeship programs to prepare promising candidates to become principal supervisors.

To prepare candidates to step into the redesigned supervisor position, three districts developed apprenticeship programs. These programs offered a mix of mentorship and formal training opportunities for prospective supervisors. The programs provided participants with job-embedded experiences to develop skills required of principal supervisors, such as planning professional development for principal networks, co-planning and co-leading principal support meetings, and coaching a small number of principals.

Program participants reported feeling prepared for the principal supervisor role. Districts also benefited as the apprenticeship programs facilitated succession planning for principal supervisors, offering district leaders opportunities to observe participants in action.

5 Strengthening central offices to support and sustain changes in the principal supervisor role

Central office departments began to coordinate more with one another, creating a cultural shift and leading to structural reorganization to support the new principal supervisor role.

Districts worked to create new central office structures to facilitate the work between schools and central offices as the principal supervisors' roles changed. Specifically, districts reallocated supervisors' noninstructional responsibilities to help them focus on supporting principals' instructional leadership; implemented new structures to foster collaboration and coordination across departments; and improved systems of communication among the central office, supervisors, and schools.

B. Looking ahead: Areas for continued focus

The experiences of the six PSI districts demonstrate that it is possible for districts to make substantial, meaningful changes to the principal supervisor role. But this work is ongoing. Moving into the final year of the initiative and beyond, districts may focus on the following areas as they continue to refine the principal supervisor role and work to sustain their initial accomplishments.

- **Developing a common definition of instructional leadership.** Some supervisors reported ambiguity about what it means to support and develop principals' instructional leadership. In addition, the principal supervisor role in some districts has become heavily focused on developing high quality instruction. This can be considered a requisite element of strong instructional leadership, but it is only part of a multifaceted set of instructional leadership skills, such as developing a strong school culture and providing job-embedded professional development to teachers. Districts should continue to clarify the focus of the supervisor role to help articulate the priorities and practices for supervisors.
- **Identifying a balance between supervisors' central office involvement and time spent in schools.** When supervisors had to spend too much time on central office matters, they found they had insufficient time to visit their schools and provide the intended support for principals. However, too little time in the central office left supervisors out of the loop and disconnected from central office departments and personnel; these connections are needed to ensure that principals are supported.
- **Developing internal capacity to provide high quality, job-embedded training and support for supervisors.** District leaders continue to determine how to sustain support and training of both new and veteran supervisors as the PSI concludes and fewer resources are available for technical assistance.
- **Developing and refining approaches to identify and train new supervisors.** Districts that have developed supervisor apprenticeship programs can consider how to make time for participants to engage in apprenticeship programs at a high level and how to provide other opportunities for participants who complete the program but are not placed immediately into a supervisor role.
- **Continuing to shift central office departments toward a school-centered culture.** This shift is a significant cultural change for districts. Districts will continue to work on consistency across departments to support principal supervisors in their new roles.
- **Maintaining existing momentum in the changes to the principal supervisor role.** Moving forward, districts will need to work to ensure that progress continues along the same trajectory in the coming years, through the end of the initiative and beyond.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR INITIATIVE

In 2014, The Wallace Foundation launched the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI), a four-year, $24-million-dollar effort to redefine principal supervision in six urban school districts. Specifically, the PSI aimed to help districts overhaul a position traditionally focused on administration, operations, and compliance to one dedicated to developing and supporting principals to improve instruction in schools. The motivating hypothesis of the PSI is that changing the role of principal supervisors from overseeing operations to providing instructional leadership can drive improvement in principal effectiveness. Improved principal effectiveness can, in turn, be an important lever for improving instruction and, ultimately, student performance.

Six urban districts are participating in the PSI:[2]

- Broward County Public Schools, Florida
- Baltimore City Public Schools, Maryland
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Ohio
- Des Moines Public Schools, Iowa
- Long Beach Unified School District, California
- Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnesota

The Wallace Foundation also commissioned an independent study of the PSI to share lessons from the initiative with school districts, education practitioners, policymakers, and other researchers. The study, conducted by researchers from Mathematica Policy Research and Vanderbilt University, has two interrelated aims: to document districts' experiences implementing the PSI and to determine its impact on principal effectiveness. The study will describe districts' accomplishments and challenges as they implemented the PSI, highlighting lessons learned for other districts seeking to revise the principal supervisor role. It will also address the initiative's primary question: Does shifting the role of principal supervisors in complex districts from overseeing compliance to sharpening principals' instructional leadership capabilities improve the effectiveness of the principals with whom they work?

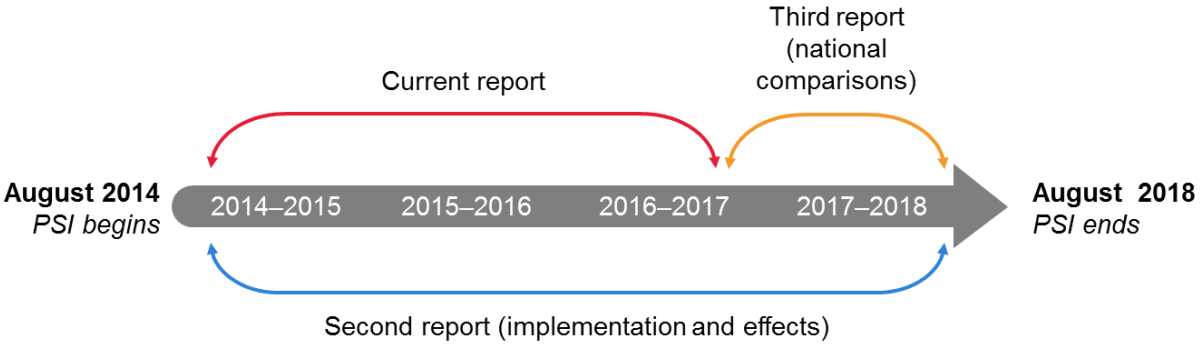
This report, is the first of three reports from the study and traces the experiences of the PSI districts from the initiative's inception in August 2014 through spring 2017 (Figure I.1). The report describes the districts' individual approaches and accomplishments as well as the challenges they have faced. The second report will describe the continued implementation of the PSI in each of the six districts through spring 2018. It will also examine how principal supervisors differentiate support for principals and estimate the effects of the PSI on principal performance from the start of the initiative through spring 2018 as measured by the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). The third report will compare principal supervision in the PSI districts with that in other urban districts throughout the country in the 2017–2018 school year.[3]

[2] DeKalb County School District (Georgia) was an initial participant in the PSI, but withdrew after the first year, following a change in district leadership. Baltimore City Public Schools joined the initiative after DeKalb withdrew.

[3] The study will not examine the PSI's effects on student achievement because we would not expect to see these effects emerge during the limited time frame of the study.

This report is based on analyses of data from multiple sources. We conducted two rounds of semistructured interviews with central office personnel, principal supervisors, and principals in each of the six PSI districts. In summer 2015, we conducted a total of 108 interviews and, in fall 2016, we conducted another 109 interviews. Through the interviews, we aimed to understand districts' on-the-ground experiences as they changed the principal supervisor role. In addition, we administered surveys to all principal supervisors and principals in the PSI districts in fall 2015 and spring 2017. The survey data provided a more general view of districts' experiences, reflecting the perspectives of a broader range of supervisors and principals. We also collected documents and artifacts from the districts, including revised job descriptions, principal supervisor training agendas, and examples of protocols and tools developed to establish common work routines among supervisors.

Figure I.1. Time periods covered in the three study reports



A. The PSI: Background

The PSI evolved from The Wallace Foundation's longstanding commitment to improving students' academic achievement by strengthening the quality of educational leadership. Research has suggested that principal effectiveness is a significant factor in school success. For example, schools with effective leaders have more satisfied teachers, lower rates of teacher turnover, more positive learning climates, greater parent engagement, and, ultimately, higher student achievement (Boyd et al. 2011; Grissom et al. 2015; Grissom and Loeb 2011; Hallinger et al. 1996; Leithwood et al. 2004; Sebastian and Allensworth 2012). Increasingly, school districts expect principals to improve their teachers' performance through observations, feedback, and other forms of instructional leadership (Neumerski et al. forthcoming), yet districts are only beginning to invest in local district support for principals themselves (Goff et al. 2014). The principal supervisor is a natural locus for such support, and recent research suggests that improving the effectiveness of principal supervisors might be essential for improving the effectiveness of principals (Corcoran et al. 2013).

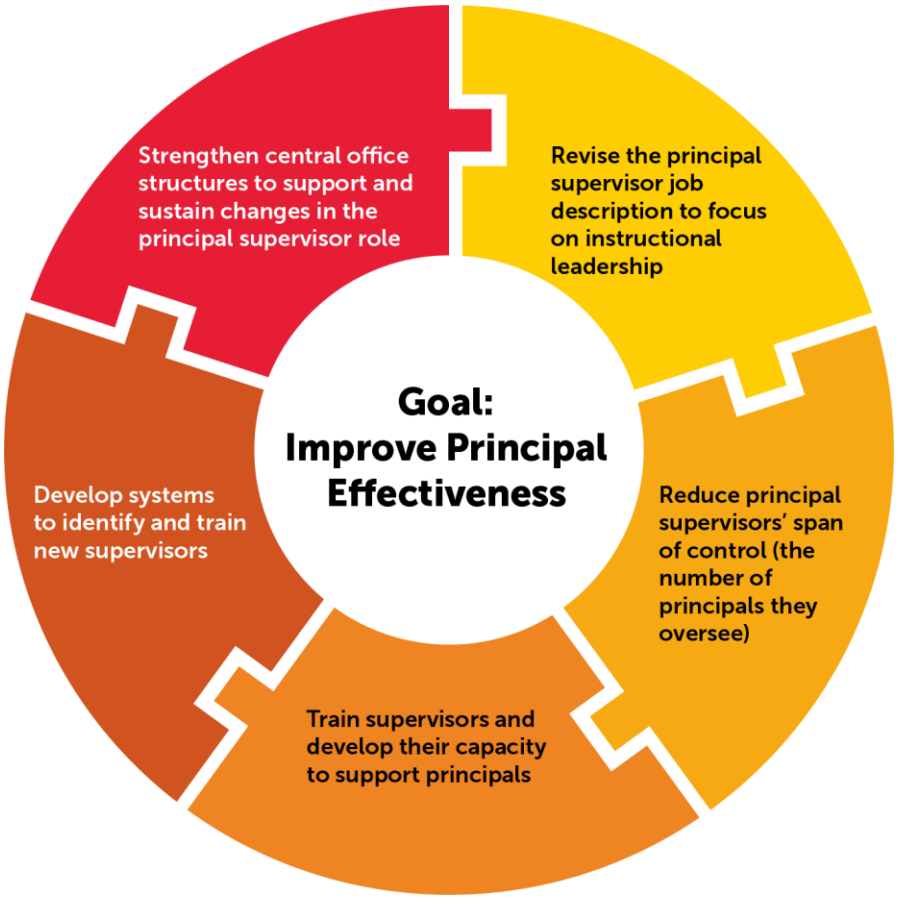
The PSI is the outcome of a deliberate effort by The Wallace Foundation to promote a vision for principal supervisors as drivers of instructional leadership among principals. Researchers who conducted the evaluation of The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative found that many districts involved in the initiative decreased the supervisor-to-principal ratio for supervisors of novice principals to provide needed supports. In addition, these supervisors shifted the focus of their work with principals from administrative oversight and operations to

instructional leadership. A large majority of principals surveyed valued the support they received as a result of this shift. Still, the same research found that the capacity of principal supervisors to support and coach principals varied greatly, and operational tasks stymied many supervisors' ability to engage in instructional leadership support (Turnbull et al. 2016). These findings suggested a need to explore additional ways to leverage principal supervision to develop and support principals.

B. The core components of the PSI

The design of the PSI consists of five core components (Figure I.2), which districts implemented according to their local contexts and needs.

Figure I.2. The five core components of the PSI



Revising the principal supervisors' job description to focus on instructional leadership. Principals need support from supervisors to act primarily as instructional leaders, rather than as building managers. Traditionally, however, central offices required principal supervisors to focus on compliance, such as ensuring principals had submitted appropriate forms for budgeting and state accountability, checking on the completion of school improvement plans, and monitoring whether Individualized Education Plans were up to date. This left principal supervisors with little time to provide support for instructional leadership. Thus, one key component of the PSI is to help districts reorient expectations for supervisors' work to focus on instructional leadership in

schools. Revising the job description is the first step for district leaders to redefine and codify their vision for the principal supervisors' role.

Reducing principal supervisors' span of control. It is difficult for supervisors to effectively support a large number of principals, especially when the role includes regular school visits with ongoing feedback to principals. Thus, reducing the span of control, or the number of principals each supervisor oversees, is a central component of the PSI. Districts are expected to sustain the reduced spans of control with internal funding by the end of the initiative.

Training supervisors and developing their capacity to support principals. The significant shift in the revised role for supervisors requires new and different areas of expertise than previously required for the position. To address these needs, districts work with external technical assistance providers to develop supervisors' capacity and skills to coach, mentor, and provide professional development for principals and to manage learning communities.

Developing systems to identify and train new supervisors (succession planning). With the PSI's support, districts identify and develop new talent to fill future principal supervisor positions by creating a cadre of new supervisors with the requisite capacities for the revised supervisor role. Approaches to this component can include apprenticeship programs to prepare future principal supervisors to step into the position or developing leader tracking systems to identify and prepare prospective principal supervisors.

Strengthening central office structures to support and sustain changes in the principal supervisor role. The change in the principal supervisor role requires shifting many managerial tasks, which supervisors previously handled, to other central office personnel; central office culture and structures also change to align with and support the new supervisors' role. Furthermore, as their work shifts away from administration, compliance, and operations, supervisors work more closely with other academics-oriented departments, such as curriculum and teaching and learning. Although The Wallace Foundation asked that districts create a detailed plan for central office change only by the conclusion of the initiative, districts began to address this component even in early implementation.

C. The districts in the PSI

The foundation chose six urban districts to implement the PSI. The foundation selected districts that it thought saw the potential value of redefining the principal supervisor role as a lever for change. At the beginning of the PSI, districts provided background demographic information about their student populations, number of schools and principals, and the corresponding span of control of the principal supervisors.

- **Baltimore City Public Schools** is the fourth-largest school system in Maryland. Baltimore joined the PSI in August 2015, though the district had engaged in a process to redefine principal supervision before joining the initiative. At the start of the PSI, there were about 104,000 students and 162 principals in the district. The average span of control for supervisors (now called instructional leadership executive directors) before the PSI was 13. The district experienced turnover in leadership in summer 2016, leading to a new superintendent and chief academic officer.

- **Broward County Public Schools** is the second-largest school district in Florida and the sixth-largest public school system in the United States. At the beginning of the PSI, the district served about 256,000 students and had 228 principals. Before the PSI, supervisors, now called cadre directors, had an average span of control of 21.
- **Cleveland Metropolitan School District** is the second-largest school district in Ohio. When Cleveland began the PSI, the district served about 45,000 students and had 100 principals. Supervisors, now called network support leaders, had an average span of control of 16 before the PSI.
- **Des Moines Public Schools** is the largest district in Iowa. At the beginning of the PSI, the district served about 33,000 students and had 65 principals. Before the PSI, the average span of control was 16 for supervisors, who are now called directors.
- **Long Beach Unified School District** is California's third-largest school district. There were about 85,000 students and 86 principals in the district at the beginning of the PSI. The principal supervisors in Long Beach are now called now called directors, though assistant superintendents supervise some principals. Before the PSI, the average span of control was 17.
- **Minneapolis Public Schools** is the third-largest school district in Minnesota. At the beginning of the PSI, there were about 35,000 students in the district. The district employed 57 principals. The average span of control for principal supervisors (called associate superintendents) before the initiative was 17. Minneapolis was without a permanent superintendent from December 2014 until summer 2016.

D. The principal supervisor role before the PSI

Across the PSI districts, central office leaders, principal supervisors, and principals who we interviewed in 2015 consistently described the role of the principal supervisor before the PSI as compliance oriented. Supervisors were heavily involved in operational issues, such as building maintenance, and tasked with resolving issues that schools could not handle on their own. For example, principals and supervisors often pointed to central office departments that were unresponsive to principals' requests and would respond only when supervisors became involved. Some districts also expected supervisors to work on principal development, instruction, and school improvement. However, work on discipline, maintenance, school climate, parent complaints, budget oversight, and attendance monitoring regularly superseded these responsibilities. As one district leader put it, "every issue came to the [supervisor], so they were kind of like a catch-all."

> **Before the Wallace grant, my role was anything and everything, and it was very hard to focus on instructional leadership.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2015)***

E. Principal supervisors early in the PSI

Across the six PSI districts, the average principal supervisor surveyed in fall of the 2015–2016 school year had several years of experience in the role and was likely to have previously worked as a principal. On average, principal supervisors had 5.4 years of experience in their role. Of these supervisors, 14 percent had also served as principal supervisors in a different school district at some other point in their careers, spending on average 4.6 years in that position. Overall, however, 80 percent of 2015 supervisors had been hired internally from within the district. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the supervisors had experience as teachers. The vast

majority of the supervisors worked as principals immediately before taking on their current position (Figure I.3).

Figure I.3. Positions held by principal supervisors immediately before becoming a supervisor in a PSI district

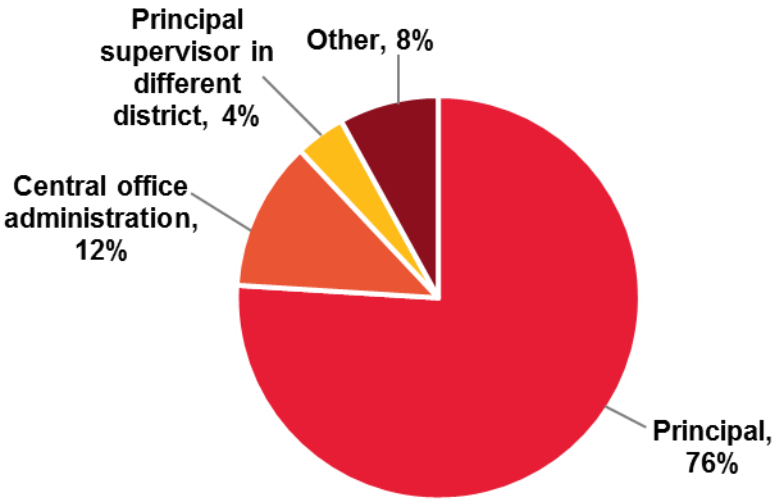


Figure reads: 76 percent of current supervisors held the position of principal immediately before becoming principal supervisors.

Source: Supervisor surveys, 2015–2016 (N = 49).

F. Overview of this report

In this report, we first describe the research methodology. We then describe districts' experiences implementing each component of the initiative and describe the work and roles of principal supervisors. The final chapter summarizes how the changes districts made collectively contributed to the shift in principal supervisors' work during the initial years of the initiative. We bring together the perspectives of central office leaders who were closely involved in the PSI, the supervisors themselves, and the principals with whom they work.

In each chapter on the PSI components, we describe districts' accomplishments and challenges, focusing on commonalities and variation across districts. The report highlights broad, cross-district themes but grounds these findings in district-specific examples to illustrate the importance of district context. Throughout the report, we highlight key take-away messages (indicated with a key icon) for other districts seeking to make similar changes to the principal supervisor role.

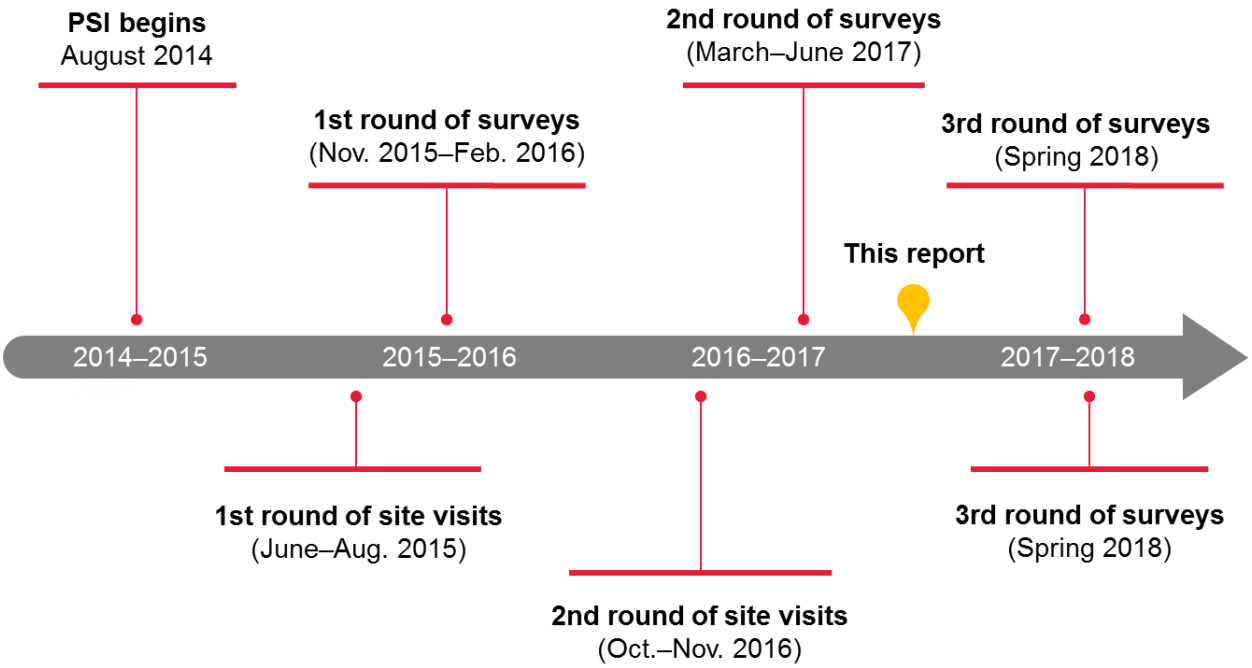
II. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The findings presented in this interim report are based on data collected by independent research teams at Vanderbilt University and Mathematica. This initial report focuses on the experiences of the six districts in implementing the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) during the first three years, from the 2014–2015 to 2016–2017 school years.

A. Data on implementing the PSI

Data for this report are from site visits and surveys conducted during the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 school years (Figure II.1). We began data collection after the districts had already begun to implement the PSI.

Figure II.1. Implementation data collection timeline



Site visits and interviews. The Vanderbilt team visited each of the six PSI districts twice: once in the summer or fall 2015 and again in fall 2016. We conducted the first site visit about a year after districts had begun the initiative. Thus, we do not have baseline data collected before the start of the PSI, although data collection began early enough that participants often could draw comparisons between their current work and work before the start of the initiative. Each site visit lasted two to four days. During each site visit, the study team conducted semistructured interviews with central office staff, principal supervisors, and principals. The study team developed protocols for these interviews based on a review of existing research on principal supervision and designed the protocols to cover each of the components of the PSI. The team also collected artifacts, such as training agendas and supervisor job descriptions. We recorded

and transcribed all interviews for analysis. In total, the research team conducted 219 interviews across the six PSI districts (Table II.1).

- **Central office staff.** The study team interviewed two central office staff members in each district during each site visit. Typically, we interviewed the district's project director for the PSI (the main point of contact for the initiative) and the supervisor of the principal supervisors or someone else in the central office who was closely involved in the initiative.
- **Principal supervisors.** The study team interviewed up to six principal supervisors in each PSI district during each site visit. In districts with six or fewer supervisors (Cleveland, Des Moines, and Minneapolis), we interviewed all supervisors. In districts with more than six supervisors (Baltimore, Broward, and Long Beach), we selected a sample of six to interview. In these districts, we first stratified supervisors according to the type of schools supervised (for example, by grade level) to ensure we included supervisors from all types of schools, and then randomly sampled supervisors from these strata. For the second round of site visits, we reinterviewed previously sampled supervisors. If a previously sampled supervisor was no longer employed in the position, we randomly selected a replacement from the available pool of supervisors.[4]
- **Principals.** In each district, we selected a random sample of 10 principals, stratified by supervisor, to ensure that as many supervisors as possible were represented. We excluded principals who were new to the district in the year of the interview or were principals of special schools (for example, alternative night schools). In addition, we gathered information on principals' school grade levels and school performance. We used this information to ensure that the sample of principals included a range of school grade and performance levels. In the second site visit, we reinterviewed 5 of the original principal participants in each district to capture their perspectives over time. In addition, we selected a sample of 5 new principals, following the procedures described earlier.

Table II.1. Number and roles of interview participants

Role	Respondents per district in each site visit	Total in first site visit (summer 2015)	Total in second site visit (fall 2016)
Central office staff	2–4	15	13
Principal supervisor	6	35	37
Principal	10	59	60
Total	**18–20**	**109**	**110**

Surveys. We conducted two rounds of principal and supervisor surveys for this report. We administered the first round of surveys from November 2015 to February 2016 and the second round from March to June 2017. During both rounds, we sent online surveys to all principals and supervisors in the six PSI districts. We developed the surveys based on preliminary analysis of interview data, a review of current supervisor competency standards, and prior research on

[4] We interviewed nine new supervisors during the second round of site visits.

principal supervisors. We reviewed, piloted, and revised the survey items to ensure their validity. Response rates for both principals and supervisors were very high across districts (Table II.2).

Table II.2. Principal and principal supervisor survey response rates

	Round 1 (fall 2016)				Round 2 (spring 2017)			
	Supervisor surveys		Principal surveys		Supervisor surveys		Principal surveys	
	Sample size	Response rate	Sample size	Response rate	Sample size	Response rate	Sample size	Response rate
Baltimore	11	100%	122	87%	9	100%	110	80%
Broward	10	100%	221	98%	15	100%	217	94%
Cleveland	7	100%	97	91%	7	100%	101	90%
Des Moines	6	100%	60	100%	6	100%	63	100%
Long Beach	10	100%	85	97%	8	100%	85	96%
Minneapolis	6	100%	59	92%	6	100%	64	97%
Overall	**50**	**100%**	**644**	**94%**	**51**	**100%**	**640**	**92%**

B. Analyses

The research team coded the interview data using an iterative coding process, focusing on each component of the PSI as well as how each component unfolded and was experienced in each district. The data analyses focused on districts' accomplishments over the early years of the initiative, the challenges districts experienced along the way, and districts' planned approaches for moving forward. We used reports and documents, such as training agendas, to supplement the interview and survey data. Descriptive survey results are integrated with the qualitative data. We report unweighted survey responses, giving equal weight to the perceptions and experiences of respondents across the initiative.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

III. REVISING THE JOB DESCRIPTION

The aim of the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) is to shift principal supervision from its traditional focus on compliance and supervision to a focus on supporting principals and developing instructional leadership in schools. As part of this effort, The Wallace Foundation expected districts to revise the principal supervisor job description to define the qualifications and competencies expected from supervisor candidates and formally delineate expectations for the new principal supervisor role.

A. All six districts began implementing the PSI by revising the job description

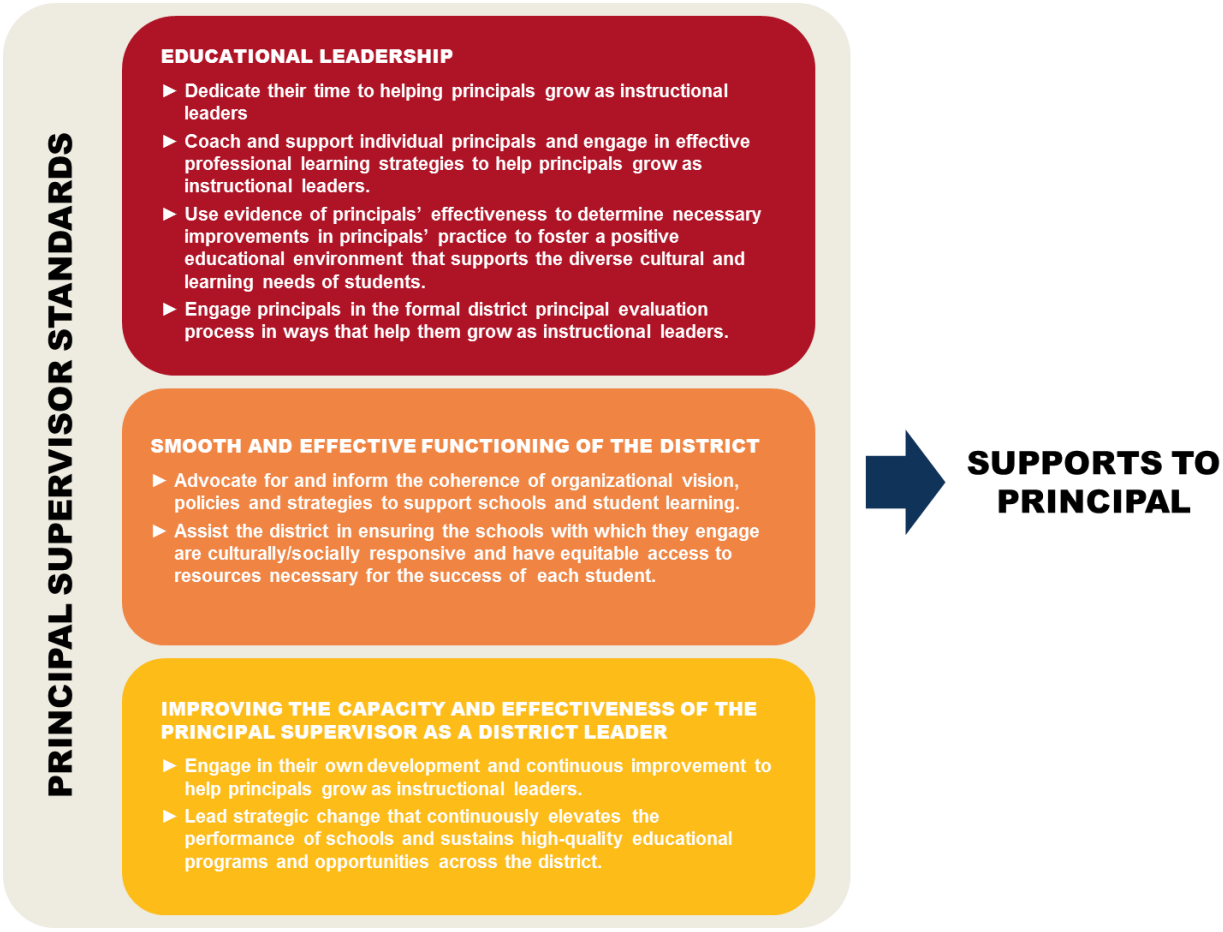
Revising the job description for principal supervisors was the first step districts took as part of the PSI. In fact, before applying for the PSI, three districts—Baltimore, Broward, and Cleveland—had already significantly revised the job description to begin the shift envisioned by the PSI. These districts further developed supervisors' job descriptions in the first year of the initiative to be more specific about their expectations for the principal supervisor role. Minneapolis began revising the job description in conjunction with its application for the PSI grant and continued to make revisions during the first year of the initiative. Long Beach and Des Moines prioritized revisions at the start of the PSI. By the end of the initiative's first year, all districts reported that they considered this component complete, although in some cases noting that there could be small tweaks in the future.

> **…One of the pieces that we addressed was how the job description was written in the past was heavy on operations … and very little on instructional leadership, support and development. And we wanted to make sure that when we rewrote the job description … principal supervisors [are primarily] … executive instructional coaches… Not that operational components of the role aren't important or that you wouldn't ever address those, but that can't be the primary purpose for why you're showing up in a building.**
>
> ***District Leader (2016)***

B. Revising the job description involved input from a variety of sources and stakeholders

The revision process involved multiple iterations. Districts sought input from various sources and stakeholders, such as central office departments, senior district officials, current principal supervisors, and principals. As part of this process, most districts also worked with external technical assistance providers, such as the Center for Education Leadership, New Leaders, and the New York City Leadership Academy. District staff from Baltimore and Des Moines also reported reviewing job descriptions developed by other PSI districts. Staff from four of the six districts said they relied heavily on the draft version of the *Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (Council of Chief State School Officers 2015) in defining the responsibilities of the role (Figure III.1).

Figure III.1. Model principal supervisor professional standards 2015



Source: Adapted by the authors from the *Model Principals Supervisor Standards 2015*, Council of Chief State School Officers. Copies of the standards are available at the Council's website (http://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/model-principal-supervisor-professional-standards).

Note: Standards fall into the three broad categories indicated in the figure. The Council of Chief State School Officers writes that these categories must be integrated to provide comprehensive support to principals.

District staff typically considered revising the job description to be one of the easier tasks of the PSI. They involved key stakeholders in the process and relied on local and national resources (Table III.1). Appendix A, Figure A.1 provides an example of a revised job description.

Table III.1. Timing, participants, and resources for revising the principal supervisor job description

	Timing of revisions	Participants in revisions	Resources for revisions
Baltimore	• Significant changes before PSI • Additional changes in 2014–2015	• Led by chief academic officer • Input from senior-level district personnel and a panel of principals	• Other districts in the PSI via New York City Leadership Academy's online professional learning community
Broward	• Significant changes before PSI • Minor changes in 2014–2015	• Facilitated by the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) (2014–2015)	• Council of Chief State School Officers' *Draft Model Standards*
Cleveland	• Significant changes prior to PSI • Additional changes in 2014–2015	• Led by chief academic officer and support team and PSI project director • Input from other central office department chiefs • Assisted by New Leaders	• Council of Chief State School Officers' *Draft Model Standards*
Des Moines	• First PSI priority (2014–2015)	• Led by interim chief of schools and human resources • Input from executive directors, central office personnel, and principal supervisors assisted by strategic leadership design	• Reviewed other PSI districts revisions
Long Beach	• First PSI priority (2014–2015)	• Led by deputy superintendent of schools • Input from other central office personnel	• Council of Chief State School Officers' *Draft Model Standards* • Other related literature
Minneapolis	• Began revisions while applying for PSI • Additional changes in 2014–2015	• Led by Human Capital office with input chief of schools and supervisors	• Council of Chief State School Officers' *Draft Model Standards*

Source: 2015 interviews with central office personnel.

PSI = Principal Supervisor Initiative.

C. Revising the job descriptions required changing other central office roles, identifying a balance between central office and school-based work, and defining principal support

Districts faced a number of challenges as they revised the principal supervisor job descriptions.

Redistributing responsibilities to other personnel. Changing the job description for principal supervisors created a domino effect necessitating changes in other central office roles. Nearly all of the districts reported that changing the job description to focus on instructional leadership and support of principals marked a significant shift, requiring the districts to reallocate the tasks that would no longer fall under the purview of the principal supervisors.

Identifying the appropriate balance between central office involvement and time spent in schools. Districts were keenly aware of the need to continue to involve principal supervisors in some duties not directly linked to principals and schools. For example, some districts required supervisors to hold formal roles on central office committees, a topic detailed later in this report. Districts felt that maintaining key relationships with central office staff was necessary for supervisors to advocate for principals and schools. Indeed, some districts were concerned that too much distance from the central office would lower the status of supervisors in the eyes of other central office personnel, reducing supervisors' leverage when they had to advocate for their schools.

Defining support for principals beyond school visits. Districts recognized that supervisor's support of principals extended beyond one-on-one interactions in schools with principals. Supervisors often noted that principals could not focus on instructional leadership if operational problems consumed their energies. Districts continued to consider which types of tasks are central for principal support.

IV. REDUCING SUPERVISORS' SPAN OF CONTROL AND ASSIGNING SUPERVISORS TO SCHOOLS

One of the major components of the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) is to reduce the span of control, or the number of principals and schools assigned to each supervisor. The goal of this reduction is to make supervisors' portfolios more manageable and thus enable them to have more time with principals for coaching, mentoring, and instructional leadership development.

A. Most districts have reduced the span of control

Overall, most PSI districts reduced the average span of control over the first three years of the initiative (Table IV.1). The span of control across all six districts in the third year of the initiative (2016–2017) averaged 12 principals for each supervisor, compared with an average of 17 before the PSI began. However, the principal-to-supervisor ratio varies substantially both within and across districts. Districts attributed this variation to differences in span of control at the start of the initiative, local context, and district policies for assigning schools to supervisors.

Table IV.1. Average span of control and range in the PSI districts

	Pre-grant*	2015–2016**		2016–2017**	
	Mean	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Baltimore	13	13	(9–16)	14	(12–17)
Broward	21	21	(15–25)	15	(11–19)
Cleveland	16	14	(14–15)	13	(11–15)
Des Moines	16	10	(8–11)	10	(8–11)
Long Beach	17	9	(3–12)	11	(9–13)
Minneapolis	17	10	(7–12)	10	(6–13)
Overall	**17**	**13**	**(3–25)**	**12**	**(6–19)**

Sources: * The Wallace Foundation 2014; ** Principal supervisor surveys.

B. Reducing the span of control was a quick and early win

The Wallace Foundation initially expected districts to phase in reductions in principal supervisor spans of control over time. However, the foundation also encouraged districts to aim for a quick win in the PSI's first year, and several districts set their sights on reducing the span of control as that initial accomplishment. Districts that achieved early reductions in the span of control did so by hiring additional principal supervisors and simultaneously changing the ways they assigned supervisors to principals. Minneapolis, for example, added three new supervisors in the first year of the initiative (2014–2015) while shifting from a system of regional superintendents with very large spans to an organization in which the district assigned schools and supervisors by grade level (elementary, K–8, middle school, and high school). In Des Moines, adding two new supervisors at the beginning of the initiative reduced the span of control from 16 to 10, on average. In our first round of interviews, a principal supervisor described the effect of this change in span:

> *This year, compared to the past, it's night and day, which is great. In the past we had 19 buildings [which required] touches and problem-solving, putting out fires. It was not real structured time; it was just kind of flying—very reactionary. My role this year has really changed into being very proactive. It's identifying [principals'] specific needs to increase their leadership abilities … (2015)*

A second principal supervisor reported a similar experience resulting from a reduction in span:

> *My span of control used to be 24, so now I'm down to about 16 schools, so I'm able to get more into schools and do more intentional coaching and development with principals, so it's absolutely allowed me to be more focused on my work and support in the coaching than I had in the past. (2016)*

In larger districts that need to add many supervisor positions, it is important to develop a shared understanding of the revised principal supervisor role and bring all stakeholders into the process early on.

Broward and Long Beach could not immediately reduce the span of control due to budget constraints, and the span increased slightly in Baltimore. The relatively large size of the district and supervisors' large spans at the outset of the PSI were challenges for Broward. Central office staff we interviewed said that the district needed more time to communicate the goals and importance of the change as they moved to allocate resources for these new positions. In the case of Long Beach, fiscal concerns meant that the district relied on principal supervisors to serve in other administrative capacities. Early in the initiative, seven staff members supervised principals, but only four were dedicated, full-time principal supervisors. Interviewees explained that any move to create new administrative positions could be perceived as increasing bloat in central office. In Baltimore, the number of supervisors increased by one, on average, because of staff turnover and some vacancies.

C. Span of control reductions were largely complete by the third year of the initiative

As of the third year of the PSI, the districts viewed their reductions in span of control as largely complete. However, several factors seem to contribute to continued wide variation in span of control within and across districts. First, in some districts, staff serving as principal supervisors also hold additional roles outside of principal supervision, and their spans of control are therefore smaller than those of supervisors who focus only on principal supervision. Second, assignment strategies that allocate supervisors based on school characteristics result in substantial variation in spans of control within districts. For example, Long Beach assigned two supervisors to the large number of middle and K–8 schools in the district and, therefore, they have slightly larger spans than those of supervisors at other school levels. Minneapolis, Broward, and Cleveland also made fewer school assignments to supervisors overseeing so-called priority schools, or the lowest-performing schools in the district.

> **She [my supervisor] is so enmeshed in my work. I think it has really given us an even more intimate understanding of the successes and challenges. It's enabled us to have real-time data talks in a different way, because as the data's coming out she's here for us to celebrate and to talk about, where we are in terms of my goals. So I think that has been crucial in terms of the intimacy and efficacy of the coaching.**
>
> ***Principal (2016)***

Supervisors, principals, and central office staff universally praised the reductions in span of control. Central office personnel felt that principals received better support because they had greater access to their supervisors and more regular visits and contacts. Supervisors reported that a smaller span enabled them to understand their schools better and visit more frequently. Many principals also noted that they saw their principal supervisor more frequently or received more support after the decrease in span.

Survey data indicated that supervisors viewed their spans of control more favorably as the initiative progressed. In particular, fewer supervisors reported that they had insufficient time to visit all of their schools. In the 2015–2016 school year, 59 percent of principal supervisors agreed or strongly agreed that they did not have time to visit particular schools as often as needed, whereas in 2016–2017, the number of supervisors who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement fell to 50 percent. Surveys also showed a decline in the percentage of supervisors who indicated that their spans of control prevented them from providing principals with enough support; 32 percent of principal supervisors who responded to the survey in the 2015–2016 school year agreed or strongly agreed that they supervised too many principals to provide enough support; by 2016–2017, 16 percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

D. Districts faced some challenges to reducing the span of control

Districts faced some ongoing challenges in reducing supervisors' span of control and considering how best to allocate supervisors to support and develop principals.

Sometimes, principal supervisors serve in multiple roles. Supervisors in some districts continue to hold dual roles with other responsibilities in the central office, as of the third year of the initiative. Such arrangements were primarily, but not always, due to budget constraints. Long Beach made considerable efforts to reduce competing demands on supervisors by removing formerly hybrid central office and supervisor roles. However, even after this change, some supervisors retained external duties. Of the eight principal supervisors in Long Beach, for example, three were assistant superintendents and thus had significant responsibilities in addition to principal supervision. Similarly, in Broward and Baltimore, each supervisor also served as a formal liaison to particular central office departments, attending meetings and representing the perspectives of the schools.

Span of control varies for different types of schools. Some supervisors questioned the focus on an average span, indicating that the optimal span might depend on the specific types of schools supervised. Some suggested that optimal spans should reflect the specific needs and types of principals and schools assigned to

Average span of control can vary for different types of schools. Districts considered individual principal and school needs when determining the span of control.

each supervisor, taking into account school size, student performance, and individual principal capacity. A principal supervisor described this dilemma:

> *Twelve 300-student elementary schools is not equivalent to twelve 1,500-student middle schools. It's certainly not equivalent to 12 comprehensive high schools.… I feel like I have a really heavy load as far as being able to support these schools, and that I don't have enough time to do what they need from me, because they're more complicated organizations, just purely because of size and numbers. (2016)*

I think that the other hill that we have to climb now that we have the structure in place is definitely seeing the results. It's one thing to reduce the span of control, but if you're still not getting the results that you need at the schools, that's still a disconnect. So this year is our baseline year with the span of control being down in our elementary schools, to see if that's really going to make the difference…. But I think that's going to be part of selling it to the board as well.

District Leader (2016)

Sustainability of reductions in span of control is a concern. Some districts expressed concern and uncertainty about sustaining the reduced span of control after the initiative ends. One district staff member noted a desire to explore reallocation of Title I or II funds or leadership funding opportunities allowed through the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. Some district officials noted that obtaining the district-wide buy-in necessary for allocating funding to sustain reduced span of control would be difficult unless stakeholders were convinced of its effectiveness.

Other districts were less concerned about sustainability. A number of school closures over the past several years in Cleveland enabled the reduction in span of control via a reallocation of funds that were formerly earmarked for those schools. Minneapolis and Des Moines were not concerned about financially sustaining the reduced span of control, as they had allocated funds to cover the reduction by rearranging central office positions and responsibilities.

E. Districts considered multiple factors in assigning supervisors to schools

In addition to reducing supervisors' span of control, districts considered how they assigned supervisors to networks of schools to develop greater coherence in the supervisors' role and more logical networks of principals. The PSI did not recommend a particular approach to assigning supervisors to schools, and approaches varied across districts.

Table IV.2. Supervisor primary assignment approaches to networks in the PSI districts, 2016–2017 school year

	Grade level	Geography	School theme/focus	School performance
Baltimore	✓	✓		
Broward	✓	✓		✓
Cleveland			✓	✓
Des Moines	✓			
Long Beach	✓			
Minneapolis	✓		✓	✓

Sources: District interviews and principal supervisor surveys.

> **We have now three principal supervisors who are overseeing our turnaround schools. Before, those turnaround schools were mixed in with all of the other supervisor assignments. Now, they're sitting under specific principal supervisors, whose span of control is anywhere between 10 and 11. We did that because we wanted to make sure that we were in alignment and that we knew that the work sometimes for our turnaround schools and turnaround principals is a lot more in-depth than that of a non-turnaround school.**
>
> ***District Leader (2016)***

Typically, districts based school assignments on one primary factor, such as grade levels or geography, but sometimes considered other factors as well. Five districts assigned schools to supervisors by grade level (elementary, middle, and high schools) (Table IV.2). Broward grouped schools by grade level and tried to ensure supervisors had a mix of high- and low-needs schools. By the third year of the initiative, it also began to consider geography as well, to reduce supervisors' driving time. Long Beach used a multistep method—it first assigned supervisors to grade levels and then within these grade levels assigned supervisors a mix of high- and low-performing schools. Long Beach also assigned principals to supervisors in groups defined by grade levels. Cleveland assigned supervisors to schools based on themes, such as technology-focused schools or schools serving English language learners. One of these networks intentionally captured all of the highest-performing schools in the district. Minneapolis used multiple assignment strategies; it grouped all magnet schools with a single supervisor and others by grade level. Broward, Cleveland, and Minneapolis also created networks for low-performing schools.

Interestingly, districts based supervisor assignments on *school* characteristics such as theme, geography (including feeder patterns), and student achievement, but rarely on *principal* characteristics. Most districts did not use principal evaluation data or other information about principals as a criterion for supervisor assignments. The exception was Long Beach, where some supervisors reported that the district took principals' coaching needs and supervisory experience into account in assignments for 2016–2017.

By hiring more supervisors and reducing their spans of control, districts were able to rethink principal supervisor assignments and start matching supervisors to schools they thought would benefit most from their support. Thus, districts also generally designed their assignment strategies to capitalize on supervisors' expertise—whether in a particular grade level or specific school needs. Districts that assigned supervisors based on geography did so to reduce supervisors' driving time and to allow for better coordination among principals in the network and across feeder schools.

> **Last year I had 19 middle schools. I still have 19 middle schools, but I'm not driving all over the district. So what it's allowing me to do is to work in tandem with maybe those 1 or 2 middle schools in that zone that connect to that high school, and then allowing me to work with my peer principal supervisor at the high school to make sure that we have a strong alignment of curriculum, and of innovative programs.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2016)***

F. Districts faced some challenges in allocating and assigning supervisors to schools

Districts faced a number of dilemmas in determining how to assign supervisors to schools and how to organize supervisors' portfolios and networks.

Supervisors faced multiple changes in assignments. In most districts, there was a lack of stability and continuity in supervisor assignments from the 2015–2016 to 2016–2017 school year due to (1) supervisor turnover, such as retirements or movement into other positions; (2) changes in supervisor assignment policy; (3) hiring of additional supervisors to reduce the span of control; and (4) attrition and reassignment of principals.

In some districts supervisor assignments changed because of central office staffing needs. In Long Beach, for example, three supervisors called assistant superintendents also oversaw principal supervisors. In Baltimore, the senior instructional leadership executive director (ILED) position was not originally intended to supervise principals. However, due to supervisor turnover, Senior ILEDs often became de facto principal supervisors, directly working with principals in addition to fulfilling their duties overseeing other supervisors.

Supervisor turnover and new supervisor hires influenced reassignment of supervisors to principals in some districts. One-third (37 percent) of principals reported experiencing a change in supervisor from 2014–2015 to 2016–2017, but instability in supervisor assignments varied across districts (Figure IV.1).[5] In Des Moines and Minneapolis, only 5 percent of principals had a change in supervisor from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017, and neither of these districts hired any new supervisors during the two-year time period. In contrast, 70 percent of the principals in Broward had a change in supervisor from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017. The district hired five new supervisors, which drove much of this turnover, and also reshuffled supervisor assignments during that time.

Figure IV.1. Percentage of principals with new supervisors from 2016 to 2017 school years

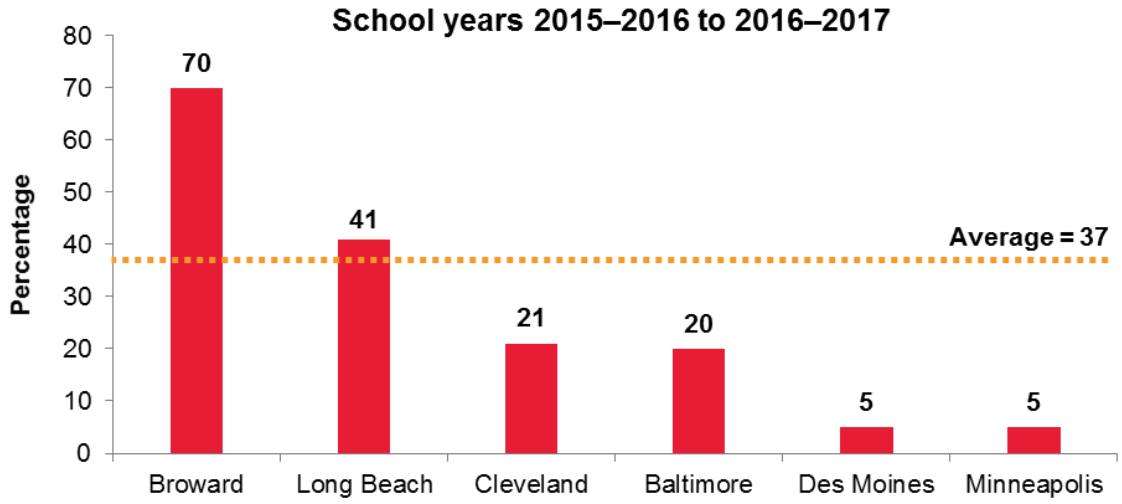


Figure reads: Of principals who remained in their districts from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017, 37 percent had a different supervisor in the 2016–2017 school year.

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: Overall, 50 percent of these reassignments were to supervisors who were new to the district and the other 50 percent were reassignments to continuing supervisors.

[5] This figure and the associated text have been revised to correct a data error in the original version of the report.

Changing assignments makes it more difficult to build trust. Shuffling assignments created difficulties. To best support their principals, supervisors and principals noted they need stability to build relationships and trust with each other, and for supervisors to understand the specific needs of the principals and schools they supervise. Reshuffling assignments from year to year made it more difficult for supervisors and principals to develop relationships, and for supervisors to understand school contexts and ascertain principals' needs.

Assigning supervisors to diverse sets of schools can create additional challenges. Central office staff and supervisors themselves noted the particular challenge of supervising a diverse set of schools. For example, in Cleveland, supervisors were assigned by theme, such as science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics, and therefore some networks included elementary, middle, and high schools. In other districts, supervisors might have only one school level, but those schools might vary widely on some other dimension, such as academic needs. Supervisors noted that both kinds of diversity led to challenges for differentiating supports.

> **So by swapping the schools around, it means that the [new supervisor] doesn't know the school. We went round and round [asking]: Is it more important that the supervisors stay with the *school* because the supervisor knows the school, or is it more important that the supervisor stay with the *principal?* We landed on it's more important for the supervisor to stay with the principal. Another supervisor had to take on these other new people, and so I ended up having to take a couple of another supervisor's principals…. It's tough because they had a relationship with him and now I have to kind of start all over with them.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2016)***

When supervisors' networks consisted only of low-performing schools, some principals complained they lacked access to higher-performing schools from which they could gain insights or learn new practices. As one principal asked in 2016: "If we're all struggling with the same thing, where's my exemplar?" In contrast, other principals ascribed benefits to being grouped with schools facing similar challenges, such as conversations more focused on a common set of issues.

> **My schools are a big range of performance. Some of the lowest-performing schools in the district are with me … some of the higher-performing in the district are with me, too. So because of that, the support that I have to provide is not one size fits all.… If I were to have more resources … I could do more for [certain] schools without neglecting the other ones, because that's kind of what tends to happen. You put your focus on the people that have the most requirements and the most needs.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2016)***

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

V. TRAINING AND DEVELOPING CAPACITY OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

A key component of the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) is to provide specific and dedicated training to support principal supervisors as they take on a revised role. Before the initiative, supervisors typically received training alongside principals or other central office staff, and the training focused on rolling out new district initiatives. Training sought to ensure that supervisors were well versed in what their principals were asked to do, rather than developing supervisors' capacity to develop and support principals' instructional leadership. Implementing the PSI necessitated revising the content and delivery of supervisor training to prepare supervisors for the new expectations for the role.

By the 2016–2017 school year, all districts had implemented training opportunities specifically aimed at developing the role-specific capacity of their principal supervisors (Table V.1). Survey results indicate that principal supervisors participated in an increasing amount of professional development specifically dedicated to their role. In fall 2015, 61 percent of supervisors reported participating in role-specific training, but by spring 2017, 80 percent reported participating in such opportunities.

> **… [H]ow do we train them to actually do that job in a different way than what they've always done? … Even if you put something new on paper and show it to somebody, that doesn't mean that they're necessarily going to just follow the new position description.**
>
> ***District Leader (2015)***

In three districts, central office personnel also participated in supervisor-dedicated training. These districts included central office personnel for two primary reasons: to increase communication and capacity across departments and to build internal capacity to continue training after the initiative ceased to provide funding for external technical assistance providers.

Table V.1. Timeline and content of principal supervisors' training, by district

	2014–2015 school year	2015–2016 school year	2016–2017 school year
Baltimore	--	• Internally led trainings with high quality instruction focus, norming around student learning objectives • Midyear supervisors began consistent work with technical assistance provider • Some site-based 1-on-1 coaching focused on implementing technical assistance provider trainings	• Planning to implement technical assistance provider-led, instructional leadership-focused classroom and site-based training • Weekly supervisor meetings to plan principal meetings with Curriculum Office • Intermittent coaching check-ins with superiors for personalized skill development
Broward	• Planning • No systematic training program in place • External conferences reported as main source of training	• Technical assistance provider-led training occurred regularly with strong focus on high quality instruction • Classroom-based training focused on high quality instruction with site-based, 1-on-1 coaching to apply classroom knowledge and practices • Optional technical assistance provider-led site-based training on identifying high quality instruction	• Focus on implementing 2015–2016 classroom learning with deliberate shift to site-based, 1-on-1 coaching with technical assistance provider • Weekly collaborative school visits with 2 or 3 supervisors to practice skills and routines and to calibrate practice for consistency (occasionally attended by technical assistance provider coach) • Monday meetings are a forum for feedback from school visits with dedicated time for disseminating information
Cleveland	• Planning with some implementation • Monthly meetings for training technical assistance provider, but training lacked coherence • Classroom- and site-based with focus on high quality instruction and developing coaching skills	• District hired former technical assistance provider trainer to develop and run supervisor training program • Supervisors engaged in a training program that met regularly • Classroom- and site-based training focused on coaching and improving school performance • Site-based lab days for collaborative advice and feedback among supervisors	• Continued regular training with emphasis on aligning instruction to standards, familiarizing supervisors with curricula and content • Some site-based heavily personalized 1-on-1 coaching
Des Moines	• Supervisors engaged in a coherent training program that met regularly and relied heavily on technical assistance providers • Primarily classroom-based with focus on understanding high quality instruction, alignment with instructional framework	• Continuation of 2014–2015 training • Deeper engagement in recognizing and calibrating high quality instruction • Occasional technical assistance provider-led 1-on-1 coaching • Mix of classroom- and site-based training	• Strong focus on high quality instruction • Most trainings are technical assistance provider-led, site-based, and focused on identifying high quality instruction, coaching principals to drive rigorous instruction, and leadership walks • Technical assistance provider-led, site-based observation and coaching of supervisors based on work with principals
Long Beach	• Supervisors engaged in a coherent training program that met regularly led by technical assistance providers; training with strong district input • Heavy focus on developing instructional leadership and implementing new principal evaluation system with fidelity, developing coaching skills • Classroom trainings and site-based 1-on-1 coaching	• Monthly daylong collaboration and planning meetings covering supervisor goal-setting and evaluation development, collaborative sharing of knowledge and problem solving, data use training, and lab day reflections • Site-based lab days for supervisor skill building with on-the-spot feedback and coaching • Technical assistance provider-led, site-based 1-on-1 coaching	• Monthly collaboration and planning meetings are a mix of planning, problem solving, and training • Focus on piloting supervisor evaluation, data use, curriculum implementation, norming practices, coaching skills, providing verbal and written feedback • Mixed internal and technical assistance provider-led 1-on-1 site-based coaching • Monthly executive coaching via phone on managing the demands of the job • Lab days
Minneapolis	• Planning • No systematic training program in place • Intermittent meetings focused on team building to develop supervisor cohesion	• Regular technical assistance provider-led, high quality, instruction-focused training with emphasis on learning walks, standards, data use, developing routines, and calibrating supervisor practice • Infrequent meetings to share practices and ideas	• Technical assistance provider-led classroom-based training focused on developing coaching skill and work routines • Regular meetings with department head at times devoted to training • Site-based and remote technical assistance provider-led 1-on-1 coaching

Source: Interviews with central office staff and training agendas.

A. Training focused on high quality instruction and developing instructional leadership

In supervisor training conducted during the PSI, districts typically prioritized either high quality instruction or developing instructional leadership. District priorities for the content of the training varied by the district's vision of the role of the supervisor and of the necessary skills for supervisor success. Some districts focused training on instruction because supervisors did not have a common understanding of high quality instruction, and the districts viewed the capacity to recognize high quality instruction as a precursor to instructional leadership. Other districts could place stronger emphasis on developing instructional leadership because supervisors already had a common understanding of high quality instruction and language for discussing instruction, which provided a baseline for focusing on instructional leadership.

Training on areas of high quality instruction typically involved reaching a common understanding about standards, calibrating observations, reaching agreement about protocols for learning walks, establishing common routines for gathering information about what happened in classrooms, and developing and using tools to help develop these practices. In one district, supervisors worked together to align instructional content to standards, engaging in the actual work done by students—for example, as one respondent described, "doing the math the kids do." In a 2016 interview, a leader in that district explained that the goal of training was "really to try to give [principal supervisors] a lot of exposure and some tools so that they feel more comfortable talking about the areas that are not within their expertise."

Given their typical past experience as teachers and principals, supervisors might be expected to readily recognize high quality instruction. However, some districts only recently adopted new protocols and frameworks for defining high quality instruction that were not familiar to supervisors from their time as principals. Des Moines, for example, implemented an approach called Schools for Rigor in some schools, providing intensive training and resources focused on increasing the rigor of students' academic work. In these schools principal supervisors noted that they had to relearn how to observe the classrooms. In other cases, principals and supervisors recognized their limited ability to identify whether teachers were teaching appropriate content at the appropriate grade level in the context of the Common Core State Standards. This was especially true for core subjects such as mathematics and literacy. In Baltimore, supervisors realized they had to spend some time familiarizing themselves with the math content before they could assess whether teachers were teaching at grade level. In Broward, a supervisor described attending numerous literacy conferences to help him identify grade-appropriate instruction in reading. Thus, although individual supervisors may recognize high-quality instruction, developing a shared, district-wide understanding remains an ongoing challenge.

Training to develop instructional leadership focused primarily on ensuring supervisors had the skills to effectively communicate and develop principals, particularly through providing feedback and coaching. Some districts also dedicated some training to delivering feedback within the principal evaluation cycle, developing areas of teacher professional development and engaging with assistant principals and leadership teams. Training on developing instructional leadership also included training in data access and analysis.

Table V.2 lists the training topics emphasized the most and the least in the 2016–2017 school year, across all six PSI districts.

Table V.2. Areas of emphasis in principal supervisor training, 2016–2017 school year

Five most emphasized areas	Five least emphasized areas
Observing classrooms to identify instructional quality	Developing principal professional learning communities and/or other collaborative principal groups
Determining protocols and procedures for school walk-throughs	Developing growth plans for principals
Improving student growth and achievement	Conducting difficult conversations
Skills for coaching principals	Using principal evaluation data to identify areas for improvement
Coaching principals on giving teachers actionable feedback	Supporting principals in planning and conducting faculty meetings and/or trainings

Source: Supervisor surveys, 2017 (N = 50).

Note: The survey question read: Thinking about the professional development for principal supervisors you attended during the 2016–2017 school year and the summer before, how much emphasis was placed on the following areas?

B. Districts implemented both job-embedded and non-job-embedded structures of training

Training opportunities for principal supervisors implemented as part of the PSI typically included non-job-embedded approaches such as conferences and classroom-based meetings, as well as job-embedded approaches such as one-on-one coaching and peer observations. Over time, most districts increased job-embedded training opportunities for supervisors. Supervisors consistently reported that these job-embedded opportunities were more transformative; they appreciated receiving real-time feedback and applying tools and skills introduced in non-job-embedded settings. (See Appendix A, Table A.2 for more details.)

For the first time, most supervisors received systematic, job-specific professional development aligned with the new role.

Non-job-embedded approaches

- **Group meetings.** All of the districts held classroom-based group meetings for training, usually weekly or monthly. Early on, these sessions relied heavily on outside technical assistance providers. In some districts, the meetings progressively shifted from relying on technical assistance providers to facilitation by central office personnel. Some examples of the focus of group- and classroom-based training included role-playing coaching conversations, developing new tools for school visits, learning to use tools offered by the technical assistance providers, studying state academic standards for students, and studying the principal evaluation tool to ensure consistency across supervisors. The supervisors often credited this classroom-based learning, particularly when led by a technical assistance provider, with contributing to their growth. For instance, supervisors who learned a systematic approach to coaching believed it improved their work with principals. Supervisors who studied state standards reported they could better evaluate quality of instruction during classroom visits.
- **Conferences.** Conference attendance was the primary training opportunity available to supervisors before the PSI, but it receded in importance as the districts implemented supervisor-specific training and development opportunities. Supervisors described conferences as informative and viewed them as a good opportunity for networking with supervisors from other districts. They also appreciated the opportunity to choose topics aligned with their own perceived needs.

Job-embedded approaches

- **One-on-one coaching**. All of the districts developed training opportunities for principal supervisors to receive direct observation, feedback, and coaching on their work with principals in schools. Technical assistance providers delivered the vast majority of this training. Training that focused on high quality instruction often included opportunities to conduct learning walks for assessing instruction in real time, and practice providing feedback to principals. In districts that focused training on developing instructional leadership, coaching addressed how a supervisor might help principals create professional development opportunities and supports for teachers, and subsequently assess the use of those resources in classrooms. Supervisors reported that one-on-one support enabled them to implement new practices and receive personalized feedback and individual coaching.

One-on-one coaching and peer observations are key strategies for training principal supervisors.

- **Peer observation.** Some districts incorporated forums for principal supervisors to observe one another in schools and provide feedback. In these districts, supervisors conducted group observations of one of their peers conducting a typical school visit, including a building walk with classroom observations and interacting with the principal. Supervisors then provided feedback or identified effective practices to adopt. For example, following implementation of the PSI, Long Beach added Lab Days, a professional development structure for supervisors to practice their instructional coaching skills, delve into the work of supervision in the day to day context of the schools, and align their practices with one another.

C. The role of technical assistance providers was central to developing quality-training approaches

The PSI specifically allocated funding to districts to hire external technical assistance providers to use research-based curricula to help develop and provide training for principal supervisors. Technical assistance providers played a central role in planning and leading training sessions, as well as serving as one-on-one coaches for supervisors. In addition to providing expertise, technical assistance providers ensured that time was reserved for training. In almost all districts, technical assistance providers visited schools alongside principal supervisors, observed their practice, provided feedback, and coached them on ways to improve their performance. Technical assistance providers also helped supervisors develop routines, build baseline knowledge around instructional content and standards, and implement coaching approaches. In addition, technical assistance providers encouraged supervisors to think about ways to document their work with each principal and develop mechanisms for creating coherence from one visit to the next. Overall, supervisors indicated that technical assistance providers added significant value to the training they received.

Outside technical assistance providers played key roles in building the supervisor professional development programs within the districts.

By the 2016–2017 school year, three districts decreased their reliance on technical assistance providers by shifting facilitation of training to central office personnel. Districts cited cultural and financial reasons for this shift. For example, in contrast to some districts that consistently relied on external organizations, Long Beach had rarely relied on technical assistance providers before the PSI and continued to view them as a short-term, initial source of expertise that could then be developed internally. Districts were also aware that heavy reliance on technical assistance providers was not financially sustainable and sought to develop internal capacity to continue the training when grant funding ended. The other three districts remained almost entirely dependent on outside expertise for training, but each had begun to develop internal practices that could reduce their reliance on technical assistance providers. All three aimed to provide training in-house, and envisioned that either the principal supervisors' department head or direct superiors would take over one-on-one coaching.

Supervisors often reported that trainings drifted from their intended purpose or were not of the same quality when technical assistance providers were not present.

D. Principal supervisors were generally satisfied with their training

Supervisors generally reported positive perceptions of the training they received and felt the skills they learned improved their ability to meet the needs of their principals. Supervisors most appreciated time spent in schools with technical assistance providers who modeled practices, observed supervisors with principals, and provided immediate feedback and coaching. Occasionally, they viewed classroom-based meetings as disconnected from the daily work of supervisors, and some supervisors expressed a tension that though they acquired skills and knowledge in these meetings, the time dedicated to them was also time that could be spent in schools.

On surveys, supervisors assessed the quality of their training on 19 different aspects. Supervisors tended to agree or strongly agree that their training was engaging and useful. Most supervisors indicated that the training opportunities taught them new knowledge and skills (86 percent agreed or strongly agreed), specifically enhanced their capacity to develop principals' instructional leadership (83 percent), and were engaging (81 percent) and interactive (83 percent). On average, supervisors' ratings of training quality across all 19 aspects averaged 3.7 on a 5.0 scale (Figure V.1).[6]

Figure V.1. Supervisors' perceptions of training quality, 2017

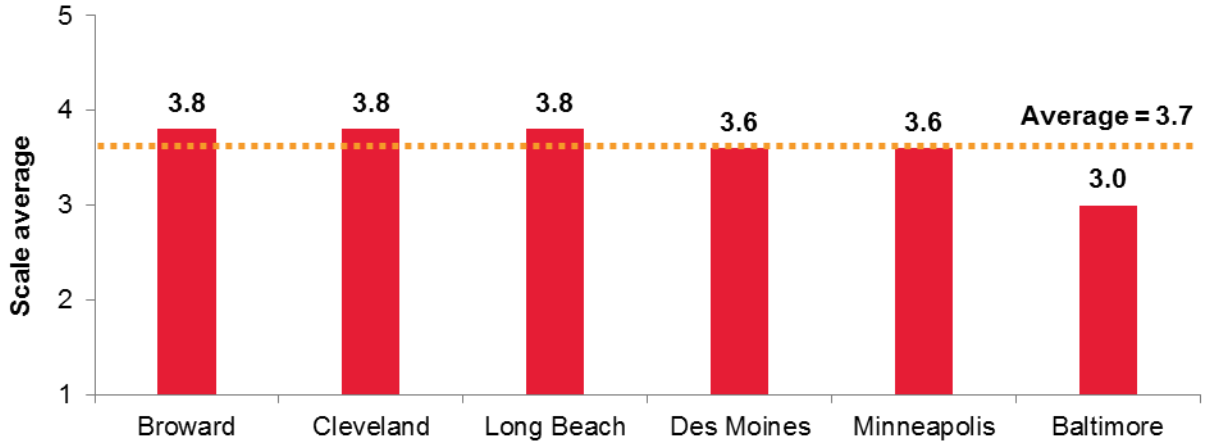


Figure reads: Principal supervisors in Broward assessed the quality of their training to be an average of 3.8 out of 5, on a five-point Likert scale of agreement.

Source: Supervisor surveys, 2017 (N = 50).

Note: Scale is composed of items measuring the following constructs: alignment with the PSI's goals, job-embeddedness, active/engaging, and overall usefulness. The survey question read: "Thinking about the professional development and training for principal supervisors you attended during the 2016–2017 school year and the summer before, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" (See Appendix A, Table A.1 for details.)

E. Districts faced some challenges in implementing supervisor training programs

The challenges to improving supervisors' capacity and training centered largely on determining the right balance of program content, making time for trainings, determining who to involve in trainings, and sustaining the amount and quality of training when the presence of technical assistance providers decreased.

Some districts almost exclusively emphasized training on high quality instruction over developing instructional leadership. In some districts, training had greater emphasis on monitoring and assessing high quality instruction, rather than developing principals as instructional leaders. In these instances, supervisors rarely articulated a through-line connecting their own understanding of high quality instruction to developing their principals as instructional

[6] See Appendix A, Table A.1 for information on the construction of this scale. Districts provided limited dedicated training to supervisors in the early year of the initiative; we do not have sufficient data to report the quality of training before the 2017 survey because so few supervisors received dedicated training before 2017.

leaders of schools. For instance, principals and supervisors described visits in which they observed classrooms together and then debriefed afterward. The debriefing typically focused on assessing the number of classrooms where they observed rigorous learning, or reaching agreement about their assessments of the quality of instruction, but the conversation did not extend to strategies by which the principal could drive instructional improvement by providing feedback, professional development, or other supports to teachers.

Classroom-based training often lacks practical application. Principal supervisors in some districts described classroom-based learning as impractical or detached from the actual work of the supervisors. Principal supervisors wanted their classroom-based training to link specifically to practice in schools. In 2016, district leaders we interviewed said that supervisors appreciated deliberate attempts to conduct training "in the school, in the work," and to provide supervisors with "feedback on the spot, instead of this separate learning in isolation." They noted that this type of training helped show supervisors how the learning is "embedded in the day-to-day."

It is important to consider carefully the goals for including other central office personnel in supervisor trainings. Sometimes central office staff also participated in supervisor trainings. Central office leaders explained that involving personnel from other central office departments in supervisor training sessions offered benefits such as breaking down silos between offices, increasing understanding of the work of principal supervisors, helping with sustainability, and providing a forum for sharing knowledge and expertise. However, at times, the presence of central office personnel shifted the focus from principal supervisors' development to other areas, such as instructional quality. For instance, one district found that including personnel from the curriculum department in supervisor trainings resulted in an overemphasis on program implementation and compliance in discussions.

Time is a valuable commodity. Supervisors reported feeling an increasing urgency to be in their schools as often as possible. They acknowledged the importance of training but often noted concern that training, especially classroom-based training, encroached on their time in schools.

Supervisors want opportunities to share practice. Some supervisors desired opportunities to convene collectively outside of a standard training. Many supervisors independently developed tools and systems to organize and implement their work, which they were never able to share. Supervisors spoke of the wide range of strengths and expertise their colleagues possessed, and noted the limited opportunities to capitalize on and share this collective knowledge.

When technical assistance providers reduce their involvement, dedicated time for training and perceived quality declined. When no longer facilitated by technical assistance providers, group training meetings and internally facilitated classroom-based training reportedly drifted from structured learning opportunities toward informational sessions or school monitoring. In one district, principal supervisors unanimously reported a tendency for professional learning to become bogged down with "informational stuff." When responsibility for coaching shifted to district staff and was not supported by technical assistance providers, supervisors felt coaching was not nearly as effective because it did not occur regularly or because district-based coaches were perceived to lack capacity. This finding suggests a potential area of concern for PSI because one-on-one coaching is the primary mechanism for differentiating training for supervisors.

VI. THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

The theory of action for the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) hypothesizes that changes to the day-to-day practices of principal supervisors drive improvements in their effectiveness. Before the PSI, districts provided little direction for supervisor work outside of formal evaluation and compliance responsibilities. By the third year of the PSI, new expectations for the role (as articulated in the revised job descriptions), reorganized networks with a reduced span of control, and new approaches to supervisor training facilitated important changes to the work of principal supervisors in the PSI districts.

A. Principal supervisors focused their work on principal support

By the third year of the PSI, the focus of the redesigned principal supervisor role was robust and well understood in all six districts. District leaders expressed a consistent perspective that the role of the principal supervisor is to focus on instructional leadership, specifically through coaching and supporting principals, and that principal supervisors should spend most of their time in schools. They consistently described operational or managerial aspects of the role, such as liaising with the central office and addressing parents' complaints, as secondary to a focus on principal support and instructional leadership.

> **Previously, you were kind of trying to hold that umbrella or maybe catch all the extra things going on to help support principals so they could focus on what they needed to … and we were really kind of boots-on-the-ground going out to buildings and working with principals as well, but spread very, very, very, very thin.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2015)***

Supervisors described the new role as more proactive than reactive. In the past, the principal supervisor simply responded to every need a principal voiced. By the third year of the initiative, leaders in each PSI district viewed the supervisor role as one with a specific purpose, direction, and goal: to support principals to improve schools.

Within this common understanding across districts of an overall role focused on principal support, each district had a unique focus that articulated the specific orientation of the supervisors' work with principals. Supervisors in some districts focused their work more exclusively on instruction itself, working with the principal to identify and reach agreement about instructional quality. For example, one supervisor described consistently working with principals to identify the appropriate grade level of observed mathematics instruction. In other districts, the supervisors' work focused more broadly on developing leadership, supporting principals in taking steps to improve as school leaders or other areas not exclusive to identifying instructional quality. For example, one leadership development-oriented supervisor described most of his work with principals as focusing on the systems and programs principals used to address particular instructional needs. Although these two foci were not mutually exclusive, the distinction is evident in terms of supervisor work and emphasis in each district. Supervisors in Long Beach, for example, tended to focus on developing leadership, but a clear conception of high quality instruction informed their work with principals. Alternatively, several Baltimore supervisors focused most of their attention on high quality instruction, but also described examples of principal development more broadly.

B. Principal supervisors spent most of their time on instructional leadership

Supervisors spent about half of their time visiting schools.

Central office staff, supervisors, and principals across districts emphasized that principal supervisors spent much of their time in schools, focused on instructional matters and working directly with principals. Supervisors themselves also reported spending most of their time (63 percent) working directly with principals in schools or network group meetings in 2017 (Figure VI.1). On average, supervisors spent 49 percent of their time visiting schools during a typical week over a three-month period in the third year of the PSI and another 14 percent of their time with principals in networks or groups. Central office meetings (19 percent) and meetings with other principal supervisors (14 percent) accounted for the rest of their time, along with other tasks (4 percent).

Although the average time supervisors reported spending on school visits increased only modestly (from 45 percent in 2015 to 49 percent in 2017, on average), interviewees distinguished how they used school visit time as they implemented the PSI.[7] Specifically, they reported an increased emphasis on targeted walk-throughs, principal coaching, and developing coherence across visits after implementing the PSI. Still, supervisors' time varied substantially, even within districts. For example, supervisors' reported percentage of time spent visiting schools in a typical week ranged from 0 to 90 percent in 2017.

Figure VI.1. Supervisors' use of time, 2017

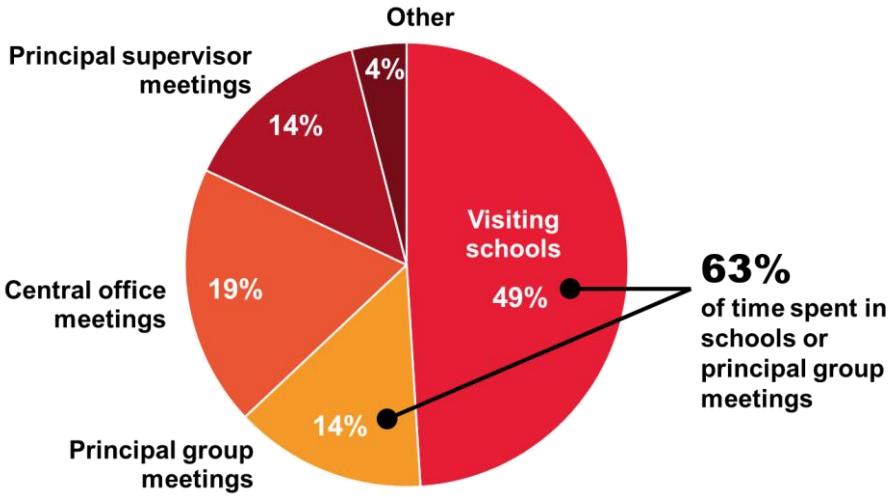


Figure reads: On average, supervisors spent 49 percent of their time visiting schools in 2017.

Source: Supervisor surveys, 2017 (N = 50).

Note: The survey question read: "Over the past three months, what percentage of time did you spend on each of the following activities in a typical week, excluding travel time?"

[7] The 2015 data are based on principal supervisors' survey responses on the 2016 survey, which asked supervisors to recall their use of time the previous year.

As a strategy for increasing school-focused use of time, some PSI districts gave specific targets to their supervisors for time in schools. Des Moines recommended that supervisors spend 70 percent of their time in schools with principals, and Minneapolis stipulated that supervisors spend four days a week in schools with principals.

Some districts give principal supervisors specific targets for time spent in schools.

Supervisors in every district had some responsibilities that required them to participate in central office meetings. The districts strategically scheduled such meetings to provide principal supervisors with substantial blocks of time to work in school buildings. For example, Des Moines only allowed central office departments to schedule meetings on a certain day of the week. Broward similarly instituted a policy that central office meetings must be scheduled after 3:00 p.m. to protect supervisors' time to visit schools.

Frequency of school visits varied. In 2017, principals reported meeting with their supervisors at school an average of about four times in the past three months, similar to what they reported in 2016. However, the frequency of visits to particular schools varied significantly (Figure VI.2). Some principals reported seeing their supervisors as many as 20 times in a three-month period, whereas others did not see their supervisors at school at all. Supervisors frequently reported that a particular school or handful of schools required most of their time.

Figure VI.2. Principal reports of the number of meetings with their supervisor at school in 2017 during a three-month period

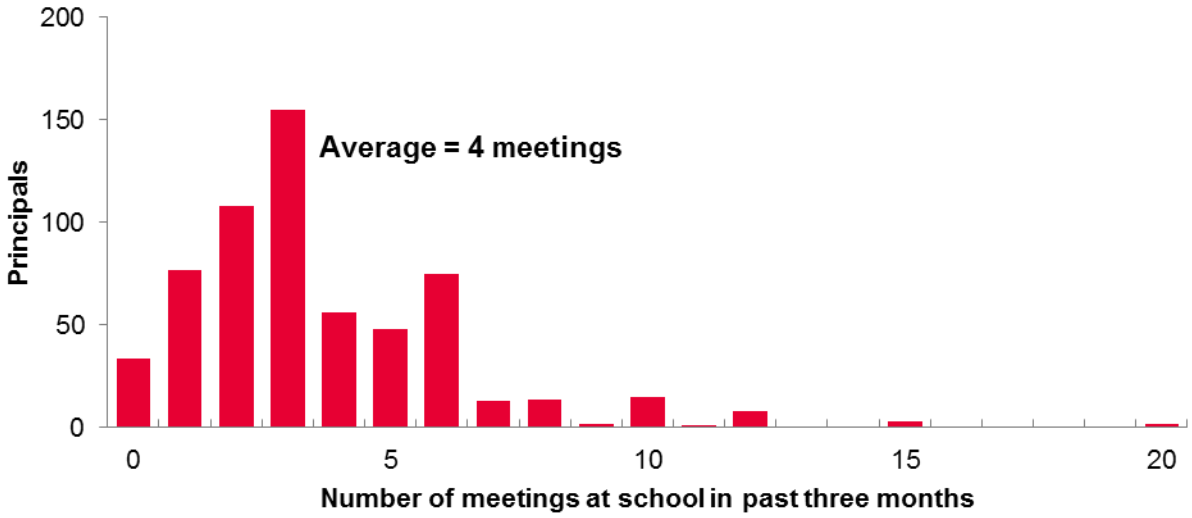


Figure reads: "In 2017, principals reported meeting with their supervisor at school an average of about four times in the past three months."

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: The survey question read: "Over the past three months, how many times have you met *with your principal supervisor* in the following settings? In your school."

Some districts established minimum expectations for how often principals should expect to see their supervisors at school. For example, Long Beach required supervisors to visit each school at least every other week, with supervisors' discretion to determine additional visits. The remaining districts provided supervisors with full autonomy over the frequency of school visits.

Both principals and supervisors emphasized that they remained in close contact outside of school visits. Principals indicated that their supervisors were available to talk on the phone and were responsive via text or email. Principals who reported rarely seeing their supervisors often reported having little need for more frequent visits and, as one principal noted, "If I said that I needed her, she would come right over" (2016).

The focus of the supervisors' work related largely to instructional leadership. Principals reported that their supervisors spent more time on instructional leadership matters than on operational issues (Figure VI.3). On average, principals noted that supervisors spent more than half of their time working with them on instructional leadership during a three-month period in the third year of the initiative.

Figure VI.3. Supervisors' time spent in a typical week working with principals on instructional leadership and operations in the PSI districts, 2017

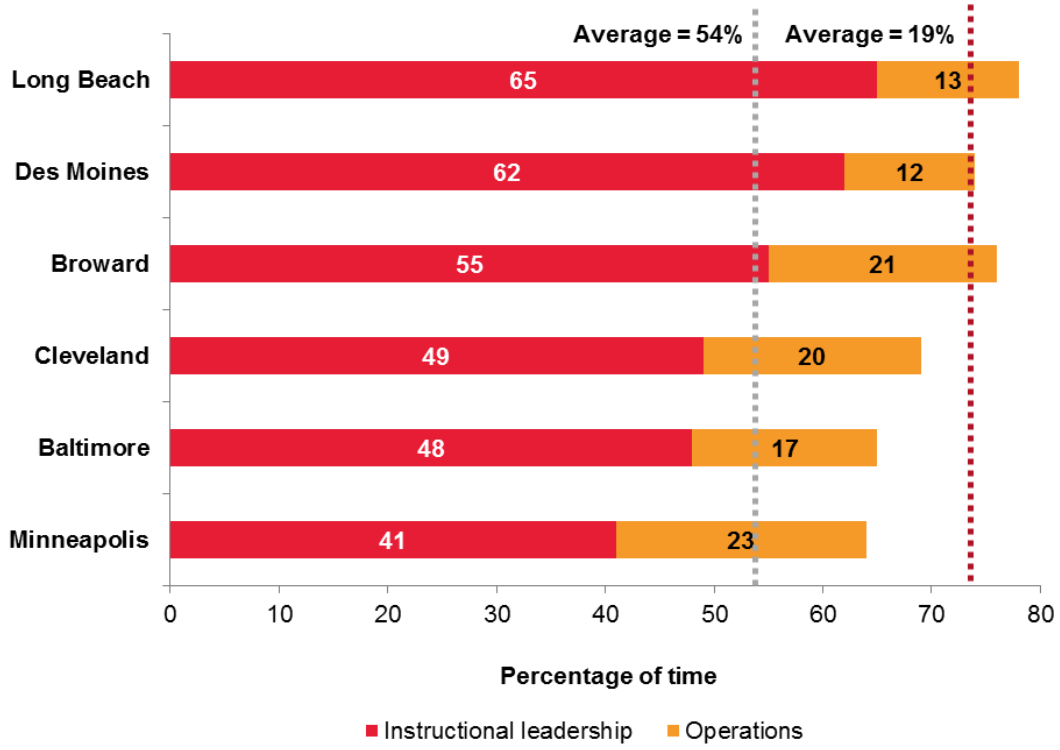


Figure reads, "Long Beach supervisors spent 65 percent of their time working with principals on instructional leadership in a typical week in 2017."

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: The survey question read: "Over the past three months, what percentage of time did you spend working with your principal supervisor on each of the following?" Time on instructional leadership decreased from an average of 62 percent in 2016 to 54 percent in 2017, and time on operations increased slightly on average, from 16 to 19 percent in the same time period. We attribute this to supervisors qualitatively using the time in schools differently and a deeper understanding of instructional leadership practices.

However, districts found that ignoring operational matters completely was often counterproductive. Supervisors and principals reported instances when supervisors had to balance instructional leadership support with support for operations-related challenges facing principals. Supervisors noted that ignoring principals' operational challenges tended to worsen and ultimately distract from instructional leadership.

> **When the [shift] began, the push was so heavily on instructional leadership, organizational management was ignored to the point that it became detrimental to our role.**
>
> ***District Leader (2016)***

Operations, however, was only one of many matters that vied for the time supervisors and principals spent together. In addition to relying heavily on their supervisors for support related to instructional quality, principals also reported several other areas for which supervisors were their main contact, such as budgeting and curriculum and personnel issues (Figure VI.4).

Figure VI.4. Principals' reports of areas in which supervisors were main contact

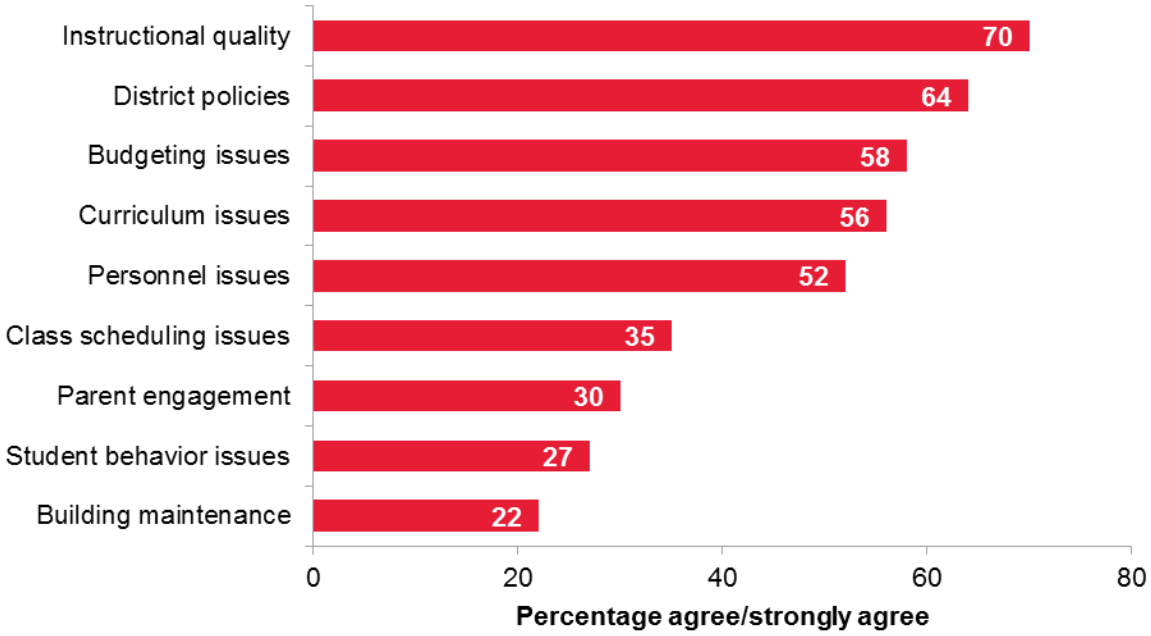


Figure reads: "70 percent of principals agreed that their supervisor was their main contact for instructional quality issues in 2017."

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: The survey question read: "Thinking about the *past three months*, to what extent do you agree or disagree that your principal supervisor is your main contact for support on the following?" The data from the 2016 surveys are similar; one exception is budgeting issues, with a decrease of 12 percent from 2016 to 2017.

Supervisors also worked with school personnel other than principals. Supervisors sometimes worked with other personnel, such as assistant principals, when visiting a school. For example, Broward principals reported that supervisors regularly included the full school leadership team in building walk-throughs and school-based meetings. About one-quarter of principals in other PSI districts reported similarly that supervisors worked directly with assistant principals, coaches, and other school leaders at least some of the time. Direct work with teachers was rare, but when present it included activities such as visiting teachers' professional learning community (PLC) meetings to provide feedback.

Despite a focus on instructional leadership, supervisors retained an important operational and managerial role with their principals.

C. Principal supervisors developed principals' instructional leadership through walk-throughs, feedback, and coaching

Supervisors worked with principals to develop their instructional leadership through walk-throughs, feedback, coaching, leading principal networks and learning communities, and evaluating principals.

Walk-throughs. Walk-throughs were increasingly central to the interactions between principals and supervisors during the early years of the initiative, providing a platform for feedback and coaching. A walk-through generally included joint observations of instruction followed by a debriefing.

- Des Moines supervisors used the iObservation observation management tool to guide walk-throughs.
- Long Beach's collaborative inquiry visits included multiple supervisors and central office members to create coherence and shared learning across the district.
- Cleveland formalized group walk-throughs and included all members of a school's central office support team to ensure team members not based in the school understood school needs.

In all but one district, respondents reported that, before the PSI, walk-throughs were commonly a mechanism to investigate compliance. Walk-throughs addressed whether instruction aligned with the district's instructional framework. Most supervisors and principals indicated that although this alignment was still discussed after the PSI was implemented, walk-throughs also expanded to include questions about feedback the principal would provide to the observed teacher, next steps with the leadership team, and potential professional development or other scenarios to consider.

Nonetheless, some supervisors reportedly approached walk-throughs as an approach to oversight rather than principal coaching, and their principals similarly viewed walk-throughs as an exercise in compliance. For instance, principals and supervisors in one district described the goal of walk-throughs as a way to hold principals accountable for the instruction in their building, with little follow-up or support by the supervisor.

Feedback. Principals said that before the PSI the primary feedback they received from their supervisors occurred through the principal evaluation process. In contrast, they described the feedback they received during the PSI as ongoing and they received it in multiple settings and in response to a range of principal activities. They also perceived this regular feedback from principal supervisors as helpful to their work. In 2017, three-fourths (76 percent) of principals surveyed reported that their supervisors usually or always provided them with actionable feedback (Figure VI.5); responses were similar in 2016.

Across all districts, supervisors worked to improve instructional leadership through activities such as classroom walkthroughs, systematic one-on-one principal coaching, and principal professional learning communities.

Supervisors described walk-throughs as a primary means to offer principals feedback. Principals and their supervisors often observed classrooms jointly, followed by debriefs that served as an opportunity for supervisors to provide feedback to principals. In this setting, supervisors provided feedback on principals' own feedback to teachers about the observed instruction, aptly described by a Minneapolis supervisor as "feedback on feedback." Supervisors also offered principals feedback on data analysis activities, teacher learning community meetings, and professional development.

Because it's [ongoing feedback] more frequent. It's not, three times a year. It's detailed, it's something that's happening right then and there, and it's not a standard that you're just talking about. So definitely, the week-to-week feedback is [helpful].

Principal (2016)

More than 70 percent of principals reported that their supervisors usually or always documented what they discussed during a school visit in 2017, similar to 2016. For example, supervisors commonly sent notes to the principal via email or other shared electronic resource following a visit, documenting the details of the visit or providing feedback.

One Long Beach principal described the way her supervisor used an online document sharing tool to promote coherence in support:

> *We have a shared file in Google, and so … I shared my action plans with her. We share notes back and forth in Google.… If she visits a meeting … she provides feedback that way.… We revisit the goals and … we talk about how things are progressing in my action plan. (2016)*

Fewer principals (51 percent in 2017 and 53 percent in 2016) reported that their supervisors usually or always used a system to monitor growth from one visit to the next.

Figure VI.5. Principals' perceptions of approaches to supervisor feedback, 2017

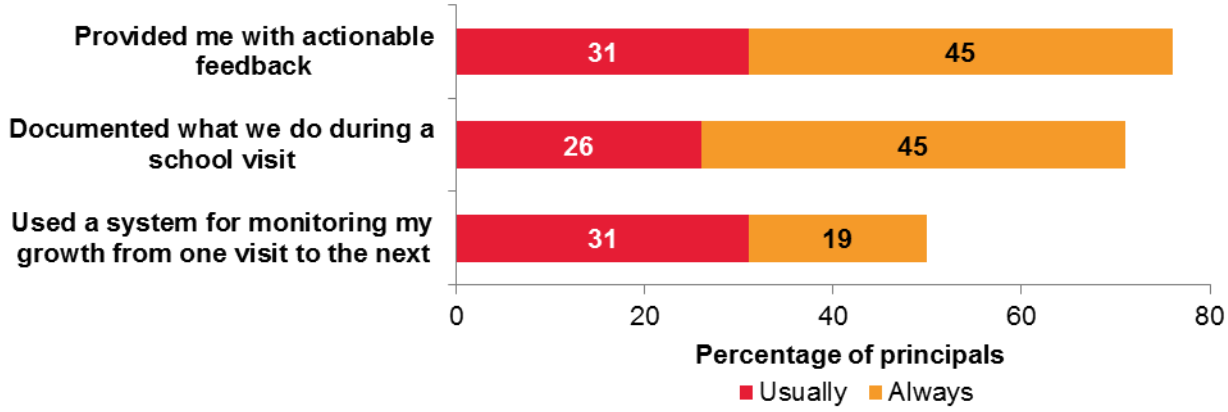


Figure reads: 31 percent of principals reported that their supervisors usually and 45 percent of principals reported that their supervisors always provided them with actionable feedback in 2017.

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: The survey question read: "Over the past three months, thinking about all the time you spent with your principal supervisor, how often were each of the following true?"

Coaching. Supervisors and principals used the term coaching to describe much of the work they did together. Principals described coaching as a process to support them through inquiry rather than directives. Supervisors described coaching in terms of conversations about observing instruction, providing feedback about instruction, responding to instructional issues in the building, using data, and other problems of practice.

To ensure consistency and alignment with goals, some districts had taken steps to define a coaching model and establish a common approach to coaching for all supervisors, such as implementing inquiry cycles. In both 2016 and 2017, more than half of the principals surveyed indicated that their supervisors usually or always used a specific coaching approach.

Sometimes I'll say, "Gosh darn it, give me the answer. Just tell me what to do." And he never does. And some of the other principals in our portfolio would joke around with that, but he truly has the coaching model down, I would say as a supervisor, because he always coached me to a decision.… He'll never, ever tell me, you should do this.

Principal (2016)

Cleveland required supervisors to establish coaching plans for each of their principals and align their coaching plans with the concepts established in the prior year's supervisor trainings.

Still, ambiguity and confusion existed in some districts around the meaning of the term *coaching* and how integrated coaching should be in supervisors' work in their schools. In one district, for example, a central office staff member explained that coaching was not grounded in a common meaning. Across districts, supervisors described different frequencies and intensities of their coaching efforts in working with their principals. Not surprisingly, some principals reported regular and intense coaching from their supervisor, but other principals rarely felt that they were coached. One principal, whose colleagues in other schools described receiving regular

coaching, reported watching a Wallace Foundation video about principal supervisor coaching with inquiry cycles and thinking, "Is this what is supposed to be happening? That would be great" (2016).

Some supervisors in each district described differentiating their coaching approach based upon their assessment of principals' needs. For example, one supervisor explained that coaching with his principal who was "really, really strong" could focus on more complex tasks, whereas coaching with his second-year principal was simply "functional coaching" or "providing support for the things that are wiping [the principal] out at this moment" (2016).

Principals receiving more frequent, more intensive coaching often reported close working relationships and familiarity with their supervisors. These principals found that their supervisors knew what was going on in the principals' schools, understood the principals' goals, and perceived their own success as linked to that of their principals.

D. Principal supervisors led principal networks and professional learning communities

The PSI envisions that as supervisors focus more on instructional leadership, supervisor-led meetings with principals will promote principal learning and development rather than simply serving as venues to disseminate information.

In some districts, the common use of tools served as a means to develop shared vision and routines in areas such as walk-throughs, coaching, and evaluation. For example, Cleveland supervisors began to use a common template for principal action plans in the fall of 2016. The template provided common language and provoked conversations among supervisors about potential approaches to coaching and interventions.

Principals in every district nearly uniformly reported that their supervisors organized PLCs, and 88 percent of principals in 2017 described these opportunities as somewhat or very useful. Although disseminating district information remained a part of these meetings in every district, as had been the case before the PSI, most supervisors reportedly included professional development and/or job-embedded learning opportunities, which was not common before the PSI. Most supervisors across districts now included elements such as school walk-throughs, guided data analysis, and whole-group professional development in their PLCs.

Before the PSI, principal gatherings were oriented primarily toward disseminating information, although some districts had begun to focus principal meetings on developing principals. Some districts had to significantly change the scope of their principal PLCs when implementing the PSI. Minneapolis, for example, rarely convened principals in PLCs before the PSI other than to disseminate information from the central office. Across Minneapolis networks, PLCs now included group professional development and a targeted walk-through of a network school. Des Moines similarly transformed its

Before the PSI, principal gatherings were oriented primarily toward disseminating information; now network meetings are focused on principal learning and development.

information-delivery meetings into principal professional development that included monthly school visits in each network, an activity that served as the centerpiece of PLC meetings.

The targeted nature of PLC activities varied across districts. Most districts gave their supervisors significant discretion to organize PLCs. A supervisor in one of these districts described designing each session to meet the needs of his principals. In certain cases, districts dictated much of the PLC content. For example, one supervisor explained that the curriculum office provided slide presentations that all supervisors had to use during PLC meetings.

E. Principal evaluation systems continued to develop to align with supervisors' changed roles

Since the start of the PSI, every district had worked to make principal evaluation a process that could provide principals with more formative, actionable, and timely feedback. Efforts to overhaul principal evaluation, or work within existing evaluation structures, was ongoing.

Two districts redesigned the official evaluation process. For example, Long Beach implemented a new evaluation process in the 2014–2015 school year to facilitate formative assessment throughout the year, and later made additional changes to better support alignment between the standard evaluation process and the action plans of individual principals.

Other districts sought to improve the usefulness of existing evaluation systems. Supervisors in some such districts worked with district leaders to develop ways to emphasize particular aspects of the evaluation to promote formative and actionable feedback. For example, Cleveland supervisors explained an effort to create ongoing feedback within the boundaries of the formal evaluation process by designating "power standards," or focus areas from the evaluation rubric that they identified as particularly important. Minneapolis supervisors engaged in similar efforts to accommodate an evaluation system that "is [not] the best tool, but it's the tool we've got for now" (2016).

Principals' perceptions of the overall average quality of their evaluation systems in the third year of the initiative was 2.8 on a 5.0 scale (Figure VI.6). Principals in most districts suggested evaluation was broadly informative but pointed to supervisors' formative feedback as more helpful for improving day-to-day work; principals did not feel the evaluation was a great indicator of their ongoing performance or a guide for improvement, with the exception of one district. In a second district, a few individual supervisors developed approaches to integrate principal evaluation into their work as a learning tool. In general, principal evaluation did not typically provide actionable information that supervisors used.

Figure VI.6. Principals' perspectives on the quality of district principal evaluation systems, 2017

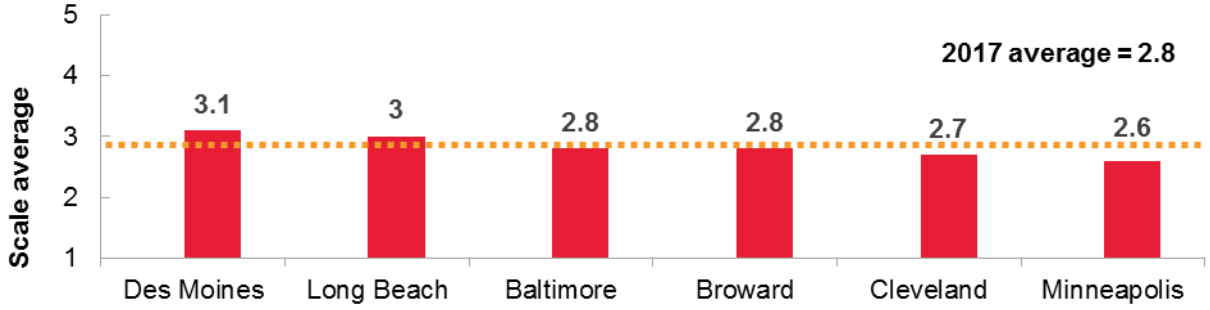


Figure reads: Principals in Des Moines rated the quality of the principal evaluation system an average of 3.1 of 5.0 on a five-point Likert scale in 2017.

Source: Principal surveys, 2017 (N = 611).

Note: Scale created from four items: "The principal evaluation system is too cumbersome." "There are too many indicators attached to the principal evaluation system to be useful." "It is unclear how principal evaluation data are used in this district." "The principal evaluation system provides actionable feedback to improve my leadership." See Appendix A.4 for complete details. The overall average was unchanged from 2016. District-level averages changed as follows from 2016 to 2017: Des Moines -0.1; Baltimore +0.3; Broward +0.1; and Cleveland -0.2. Long Beach and Minneapolis averages did not change from 2016 to 2017.

Regardless of how principals viewed the evaluation system in their districts, they did not perceive supervisors' dual roles as both evaluator and coach as problematic because of the broader shifts in the supervisor role. Specifically, the increased frequency of contact between supervisors and principals and ongoing feedback helped build trust between them. Across districts, principals emphasized that they trusted their supervisors to function as both supporters and evaluators. As one Cleveland principal explained:

Both supervisors and principals reported that supervisors were able to balance their dual roles of coach and evaluator.

> *You don't feel as though it's your boss evaluating you. So it's very comfortable. He'll come in, he'll have a conversation with you.… He always asks, "How can I support you? What do you need from me?" It's more of that than a formulated, check the box. (2016)*

F. Districts and supervisors confronted challenges to changing the role

PSI districts have made progress in redesigning the day-to-day work of the supervisors to support principals, but they have faced a number of challenges in aligning the work of the supervisors with the goal of improving instructional leadership and with their revised job descriptions.

Supervisors face tradeoffs in how best to use their time. In the PSI districts, principal supervisors were high-level district leaders who must engage in high-level district decisions—often decisions that affect instruction and leadership in schools. Yet that work came at the expense of time working directly with principals. In one district, for example, principal supervisors met biweekly with the chief of schools, attended cabinet meetings with the

superintendent, and sat in on some instruction-related departmental meetings or committees. Almost all of this work could be justified as indirectly supporting principals because supervisors acted as intermediaries for instructional leadership support, but supervisors found it challenging to devote time to direct work with principals while also attending to district-level responsibilities.

Balancing consistency of practice and autonomy is a dilemma. Supervisors in several districts had significant leeway to determine how best to work with principals to support their individualized needs, but this autonomy also resulted in inconsistency in supervisors' approaches to supporting and developing principals and the quality of that support. In one district, for example, principals widely praised the effective coaching during walk-throughs provided by one supervisor, whereas principals assigned to another supervisor in the same district reported that the supervisor conducted unhelpful walk-throughs with no apparent agenda. Principals in districts with a more standardized walk-through approach reported less variation in the quality and usefulness of walk-throughs.

Differentiating supports for principals is difficult. Across districts, effectively differentiating the types and amount of supports for principals remained an open question that supervisors typically navigated with limited support or guidance. Some supervisors oversaw such challenging schools that they spent their time and energy on only a few schools, at the exclusion of others in their network. In some cases, supervisors had developed processes for differentiating amounts and types of supports necessary for each of their schools, but these practices were not widely shared. For example, several Cleveland supervisors relied on coaching plans they designed in accordance with the needs of each of their principals and adapted throughout the year. All Long Beach supervisors provided a minimum number of visits to all schools and conducted additional visits as needed.

Developing useful principal evaluation systems is ongoing. Principals noted that their evaluation systems have room for ongoing improvement. Some principals reported that they do not receive ongoing, actionable feedback and are unaware of how their districts use evaluation data. Many principals and supervisors felt that the principal evaluation system did not inform the supervisor's work. Supervisors in all but one district tended to describe evaluation as a summative measure rather than a formative process for driving improvement.

VII. DEVELOPING SYSTEMS TO IDENTIFY AND TRAIN NEW SUPERVISORS

A key component of the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) is to develop systems to identify and train future principal supervisors to meet the role's new expectations. Districts that have implemented these systems have reported early benefits; a leader in one district described its new apprenticeship program as "a signature accomplishment" in the PSI work.

A. Three districts have developed principal supervisor apprenticeship programs

Three districts have developed fully functioning principal supervisor development or apprenticeship programs. In 2016–2017, Cleveland's Aspiring Network Leaders program, Broward's Director Intern Program, and Long Beach's Aspiring Directors Program each were in their second year of operation. The districts' approaches to these programs varied, but each featured rigorous selection procedures and sustained opportunities for principal supervisor candidates to learn the requirements of the role, receive coaching, and participate in different aspects of the role through field experiences. However, in none of these districts was completion of the program a requirement of becoming a principal supervisor; each of the districts had hired principal supervisors who had not completed the program during the first two years of their implementation.

The other three districts had not yet implemented a prospective principal supervisor identification and training program, and district leaders noted various reasons for the delay. In one district, leaders did not foresee much turnover among their current principal supervisors in the next few years. If turnover occurred, they planned to draw new supervisors from the ranks of principals currently leading a major district initiative. In a second district, succession planning was on hold while a new superintendent was installed. In a third, leaders noted they did not have the capacity to focus on this component given other district priorities, such as building a robust principal pipeline. In addition, in two of the three districts without a supervisor apprenticeship program, leaders suggested that developing new leader tracking systems would help them identify principal supervisors and they preferred to build those data systems before engaging in developing a program for supervisor apprenticeships.

In the rest of this chapter, we describe the features of the principal supervisor apprenticeship programs in the three districts that have implemented them.

B. Districts developed various approaches to select candidates for the apprenticeship program

Apprenticeship program participants we interviewed (as current principal supervisors) described program selection procedures in two of the three districts as "extensive" and "intense."

- In Cleveland, the selection process included a series of interviews, an exercise to demonstrate how the applicant thought about and analyzed data, a mock coaching conversation, and an essay describing why the applicant wanted to be a principal supervisor and identifying his or her strengths and areas for growth.

- In Broward, the selection process included an initial résumé review; a writing exercise in which applicants responded to a leadership scenario; a role-play exercise in which applicants watched a video of a difficult school situation and discussed how they would coach a principal through it; and a multiphase interview with current supervisors, the director of leadership development, and the director of service quality.
- In Long Beach, the selection process consisted of a review of résumés and letters of intent along with interviews. The process emphasized principal evaluation ratings, and prioritized high ratings in areas related directly to teaching and learning, which one central office leader described in 2016 as "the foundation to their work."

Current principal supervisors served an important role in selecting program participants. In addition to participating in screening and interviews, they played an informal role in encouraging or discouraging principal applications and helping potential candidates think about areas for development with the goal of future work as principal supervisors.

C. Apprenticeship programs offered multiple types of training opportunities

Although the three districts implementing yearlong apprenticeship programs used different models, all districts kept the program cohorts small. In Long Beach, four aspiring supervisors participated in the program in the first year and three in the second year; in Cleveland, three completed the program in the first year and two in the second year; and in Broward, six principals participated in the program each year.

Across programs, other common hallmarks included opportunities to experience actual aspects of the work of the principal supervisor, mentoring by current supervisors, and coaching and feedback for growth and development.

Cleveland designed its program to address gaps in principals' transitions into the principal supervisor role that the district had observed previously, such as challenges with coaching and building strong supervisory relationships. The training program consisted of three components. First, apprenticeship program participants attended monthly training meetings that included a book study, conversations about coaching, and problem-solving exercises around scenarios related to instructional leadership. Second, participants engaged in a coaching internship to coach another principal throughout the year. In the second year, the program was revised and participants coached multiple principals rather than a single principal to better mimic the principal supervisor role. All of the principals selected for coaching were on improvement plans or otherwise formally required to participate in coaching. The program provided structure for coaching by establishing a six-week cycle for aspiring supervisors to set specific goals and support the principals in particular areas. Third, a current supervisor mentored each aspiring supervisor. Participants described some variation in the robustness of these mentoring relationships. The best-developed mentoring relationships included school visits to observe supervisory activities, experience designing professional development for principals in collaboration with the mentor, and opportunities for feedback.

Broward's apprenticeship program emphasized opportunities for hands-on learning. The training program included four components. First, interns participated in trainings on the district's inquiry cycles and coaching processes. Second, interns worked alongside a principal

supervisor for the year with a focus on intensively supporting six schools in the supervisor's portfolio. This component provided participants experience in the role and, in particular, helped to develop their coaching skills. One participant described the process as a "gradual release" in which the intern eventually took the lead on providing school support. The supervisor acted as a mentor, sometimes joining the intern on school visits, providing feedback, and preparing the intern for the practical aspects of the supervisor role through conversation and opportunities to shadow. Third, interns received one-on-one coaching from the Center for Educational Leadership, which included providing feedback during visits to the schools the interns supported. Finally, participants joined other principal supervisors in their central office liaising duties on a rotating basis to learn about the central office work, such as participating on committees, leading initiatives, and interacting with other departments.

Long Beach's program had some similar elements to those of Cleveland and Broward. Participants engaged in monthly training meetings. They also closely observed principal supervisor work by accompanying current supervisors on school site visits (that is, job shadowing), attending supervisors' lab days—which are intensive learning opportunities for the supervisors—and joining collaborative inquiry visits to schools. In addition, participants attended monthly professional development meetings and were responsible for co-planning and implementing support meetings for early-career principals. As one participant noted, this "starts to get you out in front of your peers in that support role" (2016).The program provided multiple opportunities for receiving feedback from various district leaders, including one-on-one meetings with the deputy superintendent of schools. Long Beach developed its apprenticeship program with the aim of providing an overview of the district and developing an understanding of principal supervisor work from the perspective of "systemness," rather than from the perspective of a principal in one building.

D. Districts identified a number of benefits of apprenticeship programs

District leaders and participants identified a number of additional benefits of the principal supervisor apprenticeship programs. First, although leaders in all three districts with apprenticeship programs noted that completing the program was not a guarantee of a principal supervisor position, it was helpful for selection. District leaders gained much more information about the participants to use in selection decisions than would typically be available during the hiring process. In some cases, district leaders noted that the program helped identify weaknesses that disqualified some candidates or directed further development for candidates selected as supervisors.

> **To become a [principal supervisor], they still have to apply and interview. This just gets them into the program and exposed to the professional development … when they go through the interview it is exactly the same as anybody else.**
>
> ***District Leader (2016)***

Moreover, district leaders described program completers as more prepared than new supervisors had been before the PSI. The program helped participants address skill deficiencies in areas such as coaching that previously had been common among many new supervisors. The programs also facilitated succession planning, including estimating the number of new supervisor openings in coming years and specifying steps necessary to ensure a pipeline of effective candidates for those openings.

Similarly, for participants, the program enabled them to hit the ground running, with a much clearer picture of the expectations and challenges of the supervisor role. Participants also noted that they forged valuable new connections to other leaders in the district, learned more about district operations and where to seek resources for their schools, and honed skills relevant to principal support.

Long Beach staff noted that its apprenticeship program deepened participants' knowledge of the central office and how it worked, which was important even if the participant was not immediately placed in a principal supervisor or other central office position. Similarly, the program helped central office staff stay connected to what was happening in schools through the feedback loops resulting from their interactions with program participants.

E. Districts faced some challenges in building a robust principal supervisor apprenticeship program

Some PSI districts have made progress in developing principal supervisor apprenticeship programs, but these districts have also faced a number of challenges implementing these programs.

Districts do not always have open supervisor positions. A common challenge encountered by the three districts was a surplus of program completers relative to the number of principal supervisor positions available. A district might invest in building skills in potential supervisors that might not be maintained if not used. District leaders noted that this problem compounds as more people complete the program, particularly after a district achieves its goal of having a stable set of principal supervisors. A leader in Long Beach explained in a 2016 interview that this concern is one reason the district kept the apprenticeship program small: "You have to think about how deep you want this bench based on the number of positions that may potentially be available, and you don't want people sitting in the pool forever." Cleveland's approach provided one possible solution to this challenge: the district provided two program completers with special projects to lead while continuing as principals, which also enabled the program completers to develop in new areas.

Creating time for program activities is challenging. Time constraints for apprenticeship participants were another common challenge. In both Cleveland and Long Beach, participants completed apprenticeship work while simultaneously serving as principals. Participating in the program required those principals to spend time out of their buildings and complete many tasks after school hours in addition to their principal duties. As one supervisor who participated in their district's apprenticeship program noted:

> *The workload was crazy because [I had to] miss that many half days. It puts a lot of pressure on your site, puts a lot of pressure on your assistant principal…. [I] was kind of basically working two jobs. (2016)*

Broward's program model demonstrates a possible path forward to address this challenge. The district moved the principal participating in the program to full-time work in apprenticeship training activities and filled the principal's spot with an assistant principal from the district's aspiring principals program. The district then placed an aspiring assistant principal (a teacher) in the vacant assistant principal position. After these shifts, only a teacher opening remained. As such, the district equated the cost of the training for the principal supervisor with the cost of a first-year teacher's salary.

Districts can use creative staffing strategies to free up time and resources for aspiring principals to participate in apprenticeship programs.

Quality varies within the same district for participants. By design, apprenticeship programs were small, and part of their success rested with close mentoring relationships between participants and current supervisors. Some participants, however, raised concerns about the consistency of mentoring and coaching afforded to them.

Districts need to encourage strong applicants. Districts grappled with how to encourage the most promising candidates to apply for the apprenticeship program. In one of the districts, participants felt the opportunity to apply was communicated well and broadly, but in the other two, participants and district leaders expressed concern that the apprenticeship program was not yet well known and that identifying potential participants was not sufficiently systematic. As one central office leader noted:

> *We need to think about asking people and not just letting it be 'apply if you want to'—if we see someone who is an up-and-comer or who would be a great central office leader, we need to be more proactive in getting them to the program. (2016)*

Programs take good principals out of schools. Some district leaders wrestled with the balance between a desire to train the best candidates as supervisors and concerns about whether schools can spare the loss of the most effective principals to supervisor positions. This concern was particularly acute in districts lacking a robust apprenticeship for school-level leaders, which made finding a strong replacement principal more difficult.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

VIII. STRENGTHENING CENTRAL OFFICE STRUCTURES

Toward the end of the initiative, the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) required districts to create a detailed plan for reorganizing central offices so that districts could "independently support the systems put in place" to sustain changes after the initiative ended. Yet very early in the initiative, districts discovered that more immediate changes to the work of the central office would be necessary to facilitate the change to the supervisor role and set about implementing some of those changes. Here we describe the reorganization of central office structures to facilitate the supervisors' work and new vision for the role.

Other central office roles

Supervisors in some districts also held other formal roles within the district office beyond their work overseeing principals. Almost half (49 percent) of supervisors recalled having at least one additional formal role in 2015. This proportion fell to 39 percent in 2017. Examples of additional formal roles included department liaison, new principal induction facilitator, and summer school administrator.

A. Overview of central office structures

Principal supervisors worked in unique and different organizational structures across the six PSI districts (Table VIII.1). At the time of data collection, all six PSI districts housed supervisors within a single central office department, part of an office of principal and school supervision. Typically, separate departments oversaw teacher development and curriculum. Most supervisors reported to a cabinet-level chief officer who was responsible for overseeing and evaluating their progress as well as providing formative feedback throughout the year.

Table VIII.1. Central office organizational structures for supervisors in the PSI districts, 2016–2017 school year

	Supervisor title	Department	Immediate supervisor	Levels removed from superintendent
Baltimore	Instructional leadership executive director (ILED) or senior ILED	Office of Academics	Chief academic officer	Two[a]
Broward	Cadre director	Office of School Performance and Accountability (OSPA)	Chief of OSPA	Two
Cleveland	Network support leader	Office of Academics	Chief academic officer	Two
Des Moines	Director	Office of Schools	Executive directors (two)	Three
Long Beach	Assistant superintendent or director	Office of Schools	Deputy superintendent of schools	Two
Minneapolis	Associate superintendent	Office of Schools	Chief of schools	Two

Sources: District interviews; artifacts collected during site visits (such as job descriptions and district organizational charts).

[a]Initially, the supervisor position in the district was three levels removed from the district superintendent.

Supervisors' staff and direct reports. Most supervisors worked with at least one assistant, and the average number of assistants reported—three—remained the same over the first three years of the PSI. Assistants included secretaries, instructional facilitators, and other administrative staff who did not report directly to the supervisors, but assisted them in their work.

About half of supervisors reported having at least one other direct report in addition to principals. For example, supervisors in Cleveland hired their own "Barrier Breaker" and "Action Team Coach," both of whom reported to that supervisor and worked exclusively with the supervisor's principal network. According to supervisor surveys, the average number of direct reports to supervisors (excluding their principals) declined from 2016 to 2017, from five to three. Fewer direct reports are consistent with the goals of the PSI, to enable supervisors to focus their time and attention working with principals rather than supervising support personnel.

B. Central offices reorganized to support principal supervisors

Over the first three years of the PSI, districts enacted a variety of structural and cultural changes meant to improve and facilitate central office support for supervisors' work with principals (Table VIII.2). The specific changes depended upon the unique context of each district and the existing structure and capacity of the central office.

Districts made early changes to the central office to support the changes to the principal supervisor role.

Districts reallocated nonmanagerial responsibilities to help supervisors focus on instructional leadership. All six districts created new roles or adjusted the roles of other central personnel to absorb noninstructional duties formerly handled by principal supervisors.

Three districts created new positions to assume operational responsibilities:

- Minneapolis created a deputy superintendent of operations position in 2015 to take on many of the operational issues that formerly went through principal supervisors.
- Broward created an Office of Service Quality to handle parental complaints and school improvement processes such as accreditation and state compliance reporting.
- Baltimore hired a building manager to take over school operational and maintenance issues.

The remaining three districts chose to rely on existing personnel to absorb the noninstructional responsibilities previously assigned to supervisors by reinforcing or altering their job descriptions:

- Des Moines changed the role of its executive directors, who supervised principal supervisors, to include the operational and logistical responsibilities that had previously fallen under the purview of the principal supervisors.
- Cleveland supervisors oversaw barrier breakers, a position assisting supervisors by handling some operational and logistical needs for schools directly. Barrier breakers became designated contacts for principals seeking miscellaneous logistical help.
- Long Beach transitioned three hybrid principal supervisors to central office-only positions. All three individuals continued to work closely to support and develop principal supervisors, but they no longer supervised principals.

Table VIII.2. Districts' major central office changes before and during the first three years of the PSI

District	Before PSI grant	2014–2015 school year	2015–2016 and 2016–202017 school years
Baltimore	• Created two senior principal supervisor positions to lead and support regular principal supervisors	• Created central call center for principals to call directly with their problems rather than go through principal supervisors	• Created departmental liaisons to assist principals directly • Consolidated senior principal supervisor role into a single position
Broward	• Created Office of Service Quality to handle operational issues • Created departmental liaison roles to promote exchange of information between supervisors and other departments	• Developed an online platform that delivered weekly communication to principals to streamline communication	• Moved Leadership Development department from Talent Development department to supervisors' department, Office of School Performance and Accountability • Split supports throughout central office departments in elementary and secondary levels, with one person atop each structure • Gave principals increased opportunities for feedback
Cleveland	• Established barrier breaker position to provide school logistical support • Established action team coach to provide teacher instructional support	• Implemented network support teams to assist supervisors and principals directly	• Continued strengthening network support teams
Des Moines	• None reported	• Replaced key personnel in some departments	• Established network support team for each principal supervisor • Replaced personnel in Office of Academics • Redefined role of executive directors • Dispatched weekly information newsletter to all district personnel and principals
Long Beach	• None reported	• Moved some operational tasks to administrative assistants • Implemented school-based budgeting	• Removed hybrid central office and principal supervisor roles – now central office only • Split secondary cohorts into middle school and high school cohorts and added additional assistant superintendent
Minneapolis	• Hired chief of schools to oversee supervisors • Added parental complaint ombudsman position	• Created deputy chief of schools position to handle operational matters	• Hired permanent superintendent • Adopted new school budgeting formula

Note: Data for changes before the grant and changes made in the 2014–2015 school year were collected via interviews in summer 2015. Data for the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 school years were collected via interviews in fall 2016.

PSI = Principal Supervisor Initiative.

District efforts to shift non-instructional responsibilities to other central office staff freed supervisors to focus on principals' instructional leadership.

Principal supervisors reported that steps taken to reorganize the central office to absorb noninstructional responsibilities helped their work. In 2017, a slightly higher percentage of supervisors (40 percent) agreed that scheduling of central office meetings enabled them to spend more time in schools, compared with 33 percent in 2016 (Figure VIII.1). Supervisors reported less intrusion on their instructional work with principals. The percentage of supervisors who agreed that the organization of the central office interfered with their ability to work with principals also fell, from 51 percent in 2016 to 36 percent in 2017. In addition, principal supervisors were much less likely to report that central office organization interfered with their ability to work with their fellow supervisors (44 to 25 percent agree or strongly agree; not shown in figure).

Despite the efforts by districts to shift responsibilities from supervisors to other personnel, supervisors reported that their principals were not always sure who to contact when they needed assistance. Although the percentage of principal supervisors who agreed that principals sought help from them because they did not know who to contact in the central office fell 7 percentage points from 2016 to 2017, 46 percent of supervisors in 2017 still agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case. Some supervisors continued to report that central office demands for their time and participation in non-essential meetings reduced the amount of time they spent in schools. Indeed, supervisors universally reported that managerial meetings were too frequent.

Figure VIII.1. Principal supervisors' perceptions of central office organization, 2016 and 2017

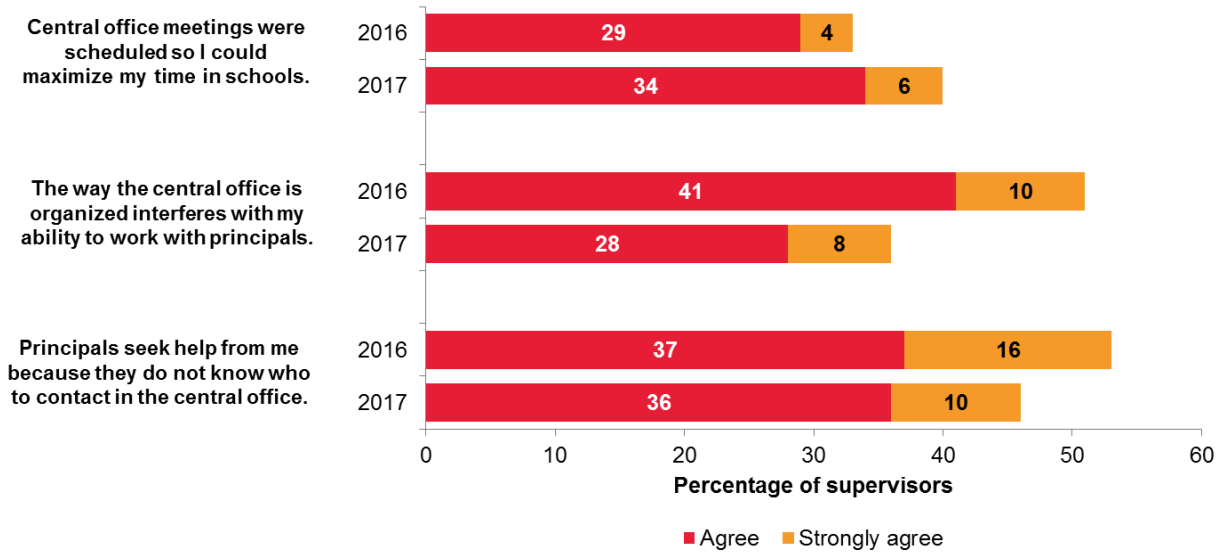


Figure reads: 29 percent of supervisors agreed and 4 percent strongly agreed that central office meetings were scheduled so they could maximize their time in schools in 2016.

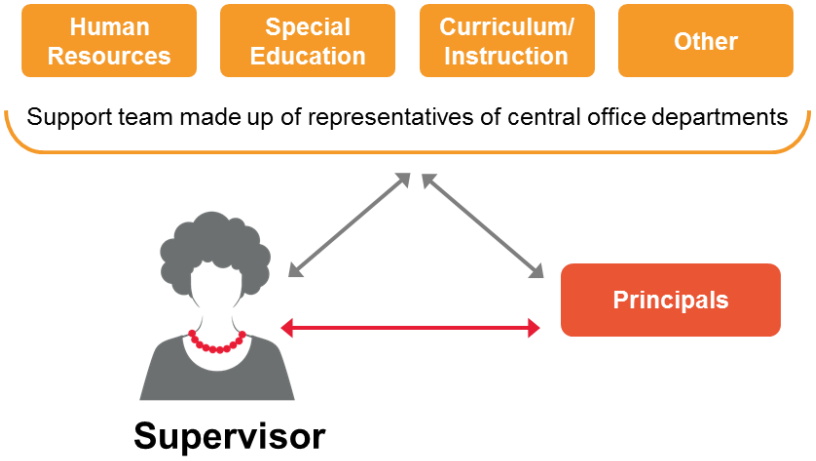
Source: Supervisor surveys, 2016 (N = 49) and 2017 (N = 50).

District reorganization focused on fostering collaboration and coordination across departments. Districts recognized early on that the success of the PSI would depend on efficient coordination between principal supervisors and other departments within the central office. Increased collaboration and coordination across departments can provide more unified and responsive services to schools and can help supervisors stay apprised of the work of other central office departments to help them support schools. Districts developed two approaches to increase central office collaboration and coordination: *support teams* and *liaison roles*. Both structures promoted cross-departmental communication and the integration of central office departments with the work of schools and supervisors.

Many districts created central office structures designed to improve communication and coordination among supervisors, other departments, and schools.

Support teams. In a support team structure, supervisors were assigned dedicated representatives from other departments who meet with them regularly to discuss ongoing work, attend their principal network meetings, and work directly with their principals (Figure VIII.2). Support teams made services from central office departments more readily accessible to principals and supervisors.

Figure VIII.2. District support team structure



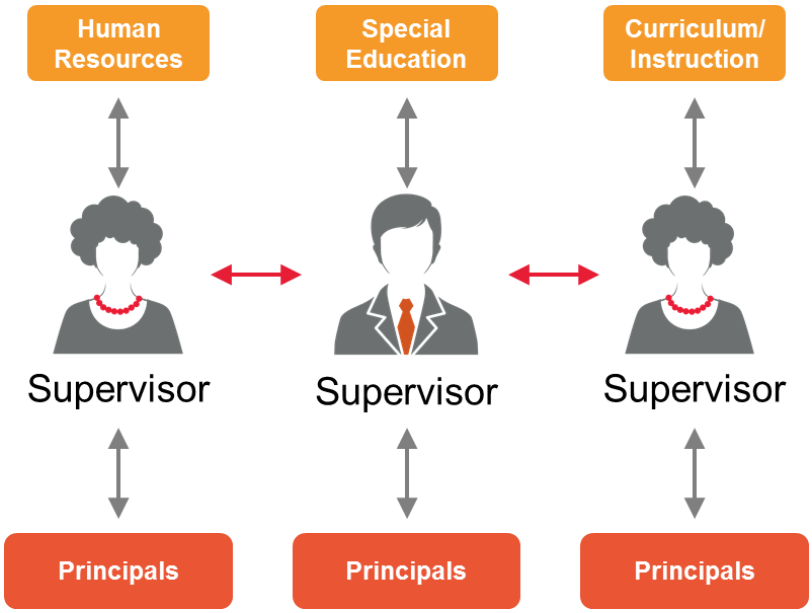
Source: District interviews with central office personnel and principal supervisors, 2015 and 2016.

Two districts, Cleveland and Des Moines, implemented support teams for all supervisors; Minneapolis created a support team for the supervisor overseeing turnaround schools. The typical support team in Cleveland included representatives from the departments of Human Resources, Budget, and Instructional Technology, among others. These representatives joined supervisors during their principal network meetings and occasionally accompanied them on walk-through visits to school buildings.

Principals were encouraged to contact their support team representatives directly rather than through their supervisors, an arrangement that had the added benefit of keeping supervisors' time focused on work with principals on instructional matters. Support team members became familiar with the schools and their needs via consistent group interactions. A principal with facilities problems could call on his or her representative at the facilities department directly for help rather than contacting the supervisor. Although principals reported occasional communication breakdowns that required them to loop in their supervisors, they perceived the system of network support teams as functional and efficient.

Principal supervisor liaison roles. Under a principal supervisor liaison support structure, each supervisor was assigned to be a liaison to another department (Figure VIII.3). The supervisor attended meetings and served as an information bridge for that department.

Figure VIII.3. District liaison role structure



Source: District interviews with central office personnel and principal supervisors, 2015 and 2016.

Each principal supervisor in Baltimore and Broward and a subset of supervisors in Long Beach was assigned to serve as a liaison to central office departments. Supervisors attended meetings and communicated with personnel from the department to which they served as a liaison. The liaison structure aimed to improve coordination among departments and reduce the tendency of departments to work independently of one another. Communication was two-way: principal supervisors represented the interests of their principals and home department, but also carried an understanding of their partner department's agenda back to other supervisors in their home department to share with other supervisors.

The central office worked to improve overall systems of central office communication. PSI districts changed central office processes to increase the quality of communication among central office departments, supervisors, and schools:

> **We used to operate in very much a siloed organization, and you knew that person was in special education, but you really didn't know what they did and how they were contributing…. Now we have a much better understanding from role to role and department to department around what that person does and what their function is, and how we can better support and leverage their resources in schools and for principal supervisors.**
>
> ***Principal Supervisor (2016)***

- Des Moines created a streamlined system for communication, a Monday Memo from all departments in the central office to all district personnel, including principal supervisors and schools. Des Moines' personnel were overwhelmingly positive about this new system and felt that communication to schools had improved dramatically.
- Broward streamlined communication by bundling messages across departments so principals would not receive conflicting information from different sources. The head of the supervisors' department, the Office of School Performance and Accountability, personally screened communications from several departments and posted them to a web system for principals to view all together.
- Cleveland often invited network support team representatives to present at principal network meetings in addition to joining supervisors and principals for building learning walks.
- Long Beach principals and supervisors began attending the same district meetings and seminars, and therefore received consistent messages from district leaders.

C. Districts faced challenges to strengthening the central office

Districts confronted a number of challenges as they worked on strengthening the central office to support principal supervisors and their new roles.

Central offices strived to develop school-centered orientations. Despite progress in improving key areas of central office function, officials in all districts acknowledged the difficulty of creating an overall school-centered orientation across the central office.

A large majority of principals in 2016 and 2017 believed improving teaching and learning was a key focus of the central office (Figure VIII.4). However, some principals did not consistently view the central office as oriented toward supporting schools. Fewer than half (44 percent) of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the central office was organized to support principals in 2017, compared with 35 percent in 2016. In addition, most principals each year agreed or strongly agreed that requests from the central office took time from their focus on teaching and learning.

Supervisors' perceptions of the central office support for their role became more positive over time.

Figure VIII.4. Principals' perceptions of central office orientation, 2016 and 2017

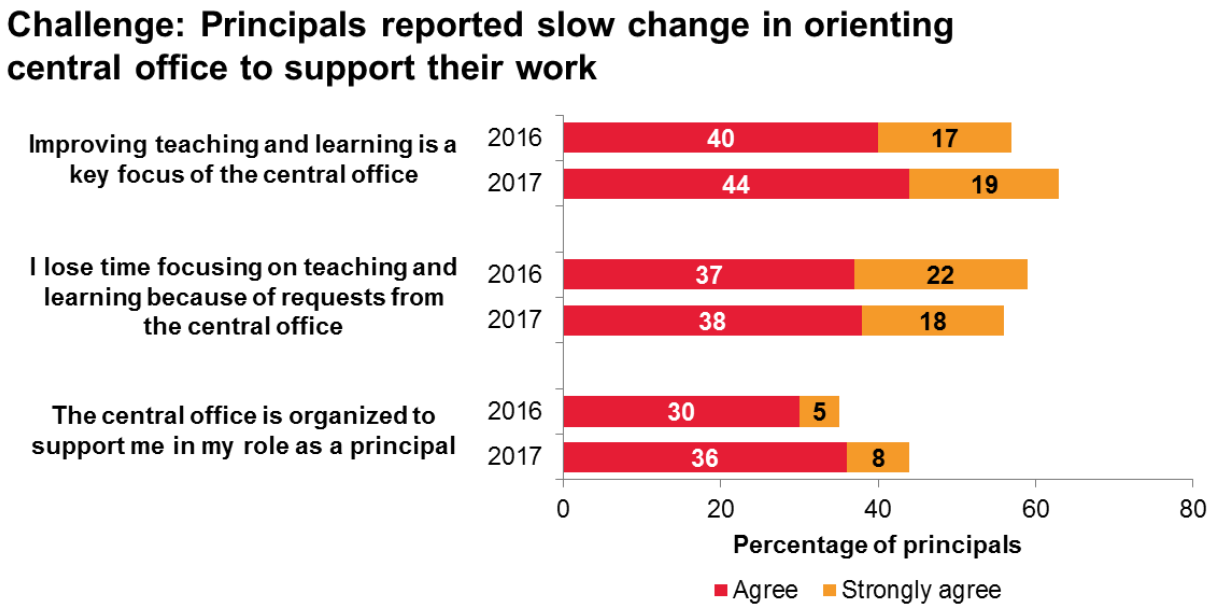


Figure reads: 40 percent of principals agreed and 17 percent strongly agreed that improving teaching and learning was a key focus of the central office in 2016.

Source: Principal surveys, 2016 (N = 630) and 2017 (N = 611).

Across districts, principals and principal supervisors viewed compliance-oriented departments such as Human Resources, Legal, and Special Education as more out-of-touch with the work of schools and the new work of principal supervisors and less likely to "get on board," as one principal noted, with a school support mission.

Districts faced variation in central office departments' performance and responsiveness. Principals, principal supervisors, and central office officials in all districts acknowledged that certain departments were ill equipped or less willing than others to support the changes and perspectives of the PSI and supervisors' revised roles. In interviews, personnel at all levels reported that variation in departmental performance prevented the central office, including principal supervisors, from taking a completely unified approach to school support, undercutting the potential of the new structures. These personnel often expressed frustration at the lack of accountability for some departments. As one district leader noted: "Something that was very troubling to me as a building principal was there was apparently no accountability moving upstream. If you didn't get something you needed, too bad" (2015). Respondents sometimes attributed poor departmental performance and lack of responsiveness to staff turnover. More than one-third of principal and supervisor survey respondents in 2017 indicated that turnover affected the ability of the central office to support principals. Although respondents typically viewed intentional personnel changes in positive terms, they considered unplanned turnover a threat to implementing the PSI work successfully, particularly for collaborative structures such as support teams and liaison roles.

Supervisors encountered political tensions. Political tensions often complicated and impeded the ability of supervisors to support schools. Supervisors typically used the term politics to refer to the informal brokering of power within districts. Supervisors worked to shield principals from political issues that would detract from their leadership. As one supervisor explained, "I've always said to principals, 'Don't let the political stuff get in your way of doing what you need to do" (2016).

Likewise, political instability in the central office bred a lack of ownership and tendency to circumvent sensitive issues to save face, at the expense of school improvement. To conduct their work, supervisors often had to resort to informal power-brokering with individuals in other offices with whom they had developed relationships. New supervisors in these districts often remarked on their relative disadvantage, as a lack of familiarity with other individuals in the central office prevented them from effectively supporting their principals.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The Wallace Foundation's Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) challenged districts to redefine the principal supervisor position from one that traditionally focused on administration, operations, and compliance to a position dedicated to developing and supporting principals for school improvement. Before the PSI, few districts invested systematically in principal supervisors as a point of leverage for principal support and development. Three years into the four-year initiative, PSI districts have substantively changed the supervisor role, changes that have implications beyond the supervisor–principal relationship.

Districts made substantial changes across all five components

The initiative achieved several noteworthy accomplishments:

- **Job description.** Districts worked with stakeholders to revise the supervisor job description to delineate the expectations for the supervisor role to focus on supporting and developing principals in schools.
- **Span of control.** Before the PSI, supervisors oversaw an average of 17 principals, though this number was as high as 21 in one of the districts. Districts reduced supervisors' span of control within the first three years of the initiative to an average of 12, typically by hiring more supervisors. The number of supervisors who reported that they oversaw too many principals declined in every district. Supervisors were assigned strategically to principal networks to provide targeted supports.
- **Supervisor training.** Districts implemented dedicated and unique training programs to develop supervisors' capacity in coaching and principal support and development. The content of these trainings focused on high quality instruction and developing instructional leadership, and relied on job-embedded approaches to observe supervisors in practice in schools and provide feedback.
- **Succession planning.** Apprenticeship programs, fully developed and implemented in three districts, were a key strategy for preparing school leaders for principal supervisor positions. These programs featured rigorous selection procedures and offered a mix of training sessions, individual coaching and performance feedback, mentoring from a current principal supervisor, and shadowing of central office leaders.
- **Central office restructuring.** Districts made substantial progress in implementing approaches to central office change in the initial years of PSI. Redefining the role of the principal supervisor required changes in central offices as supervisors' noninstructional responsibilities shifted to others. Districts used the opportunity to streamline central office departments, dismantle barriers that stifled communication between departments, and improve processes for principals to access supports and resources. Districts improved at making central office departments aware of the work of supervisors. Many of these changes, especially the support team structures and liaison roles, resulted in better integration and collaboration across departments in their efforts to support schools.

A. Districts changed the principal supervisor role and enhanced school support more broadly

The daily work of principal supervisors has changed. By the third year of the PSI, supervisors spent most of their time in schools, working with principals and other leaders. Importantly, supervisors used their time in schools in qualitatively different ways; across districts, supervisors reportedly improved the focus and quality of walk-throughs, feedback, and coaching offered to principals. Although supervisor practices remain inconsistent in some districts, substantive changes in terms of the ways that supervisors enacted the role were evident in every PSI district.

Principals reported more productive relationships with their supervisors. As principals and supervisors became more accustomed to the work of the new role over time, principals reported deepened trust, improved communication, and improved overall professional relationships with their supervisors. Principals often attributed these relational changes to more frequent coaching conversations and dialogue with their supervisors as well as the supervisors' increased focus on understanding the specific context of each school. Many participants noted that these strong relationships made it possible for supervisors to serve as both coaches and evaluators without tension. Moreover, supervisors reported continued efforts to improve the usefulness of principal evaluation systems in their ongoing work with principals.

The initiative was a strategy for enhancing school support more broadly. The changes to the principal supervisor role spurred districts to implement structures to enhance school support, as district leaders grappled with existing structures that constrained principals' and supervisors' capacity. Changing expectations via the revised job description created a domino effect that spurred changes in other central office roles and systems.

B. Districts faced ongoing challenges

Despite their many successes as they developed the new role for their principal supervisors, districts also faced some challenges.

Clarifying and reinforcing a focus for the principal supervisor role. In most districts, the sense of what constituted principal *instructional leadership* was not well defined, despite the presence of principal evaluation systems. In some cases, *instruction* and *instructional leadership* were not clearly differentiated. Supervisors often varied in how they approached and monitored the development of instructional leadership with their principals or did not explicitly focus on developing the principal's own leadership. To address these issues, districts will have to continue to clarify, adopt, and specify standards for instructional leadership. They will also have to implement supervisor training that aligns with a clear definition of instructional leadership so that supervisors can support and develop principal leadership. Tools, routines, and clear definitions that focus on the core of the interactions between supervisors and principals can offer effective steps to establish non-negotiable aspects of the role.

Investing other central office departments in the work. The importance of strengthening central office roles and structures is paramount. Although many of the changes to the supervisor role could be made without consulting or involving other central office departments, supervisors' work continued to depend on the performance of other departments. As districts urged

collaborating with and involving other departments in work that had formerly been solely the domain of supervisors, some supervisors and principals experienced frustration as some departments seemed to lack the capacity to fulfill their new roles. Moreover, supervisors perceived a need for continued work to educate personnel in other departments about the new principal supervisor role. As of 2017, only 24 percent of supervisors reported on the survey that they agreed or strongly agreed that "departments in the central office understand my work" (up from 18 percent in 2016).

Creating change within the unique context of each district. The districts involved in the PSI are complex institutions, each of which has evolved over many years to meet the needs of its community with the resources it has at hand. District leaders and supervisors often expressed sincere investment in efforts to revise the principal supervisor role, but many also lamented the challenge of making changes viewed as antithetical to the district climate and culture. Much of the work related to changing supervisor role led participants to defy district traditions and established ways of working that, at times, created friction. Such challenges underscore both the importance for districts of clearly describing how revising the principal supervisor role fits into the overall mission of the district and adapting the revisions to suit their individual contexts.

C. Looking ahead: Areas for continued focus

Districts will continue to address the challenges of changing the day-to-day practices of principal supervisors and build on initial successes.

Balancing expectations for supervisors with what they can feasibly accomplish. Despite efforts to protect supervisors' time, many continued to feel overburdened. Districts will have to consider travel time among schools, availability of support staff, and central office demands for supervisors' participation in meetings or activities as they continue to refine the supervisor role. Districts wrestled to identify a balance between supervisors' central office involvement and time spent in schools. Too much time in the central office meant supervisors could not visit their schools and provide the intended support for principals. Conversely, too little time in the central office left supervisors out of the loop and disconnected from central office departments and personnel; these connections ensure their principals are supported. In addition, districts will continue to determine non-negotiable aspects of the job, such as the minimum number of visits to schools, which could then vary beyond the minimum, according to supervisors' discretion.

Articulating expectations for differentiation. Principals will continue to have different needs that require supervisors to offer differentiated types and degrees of support. Differentiation of practice, beyond time use, remains an important aspect of supervision going forward.

Striving for consistent quality of supervisor practices. Districts will need to cultivate systems to support consistency in quality of supervisor practices. In some districts, principals' experiences with their supervisors varied widely. Efforts such as Long Beach's collaborative inquiry visits make supervisor practice public and support analysis of key supervisor practices such as walk-throughs and coaching. Providing supervisors time to develop common tools, routines, and definitions for their work can also support consistency in quality practice.

Developing high quality job-embedded training approaches. Sustainability requires that both veteran and new supervisors receive ongoing training. As districts hire new supervisors,

they have to develop systems for training new personnel. District leaders will have to continue to focus on developing internal capacity to provide high quality, job-embedded training and support for supervisors. They will have to determine district roles and responsibilities for providing training and support as the resources available for technical assistance providers are reduced.

Addressing succession planning and designing apprenticeship programs. Districts with new apprenticeship programs must address important questions about these programs, such as how to make time for participants to engage in them at a high level and how to provide opportunities to leaders who complete the program but who are not placed immediately into a supervisor role. Districts without apprenticeship programs will need to develop their own approaches to succession planning for the principal supervisor role, drawing on the lessons learned by the other districts.

Maintaining momentum to promote sustainability. Maintaining existing momentum and focus on the changes underway is important for sustainability and continued growth. Districts do not improve over time in a linear fashion; nor should this be expected in a complex change initiative. As in any change initiative, districts will have to work to prevent backsliding to old routines with sustained effort, continued refinements, and continued championing of the new principal supervisor role.

The next report for the study will examine how districts addressed the ongoing challenges from the first years of the initiative, and the changes they made in the final year of the initiative. It will also examine how districts' changes to the principal supervisor role affected principals' performance.

REFERENCES

Boyd, D., P. Grossman, M. Ing, H. Lankford, S. Loeb, and J. Wyckoff, J. "The Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions." *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2011, pp. 303–333.

Corcoran, A., M. Casserly, R. Price-Baugh, D. Walston, R. Hall, and C. Simon. "Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors." Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools, 2013.

Council of Chief State School Officers. "Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards 2015." Washington, DC: CCSSO, 2015.

DeVellis, R.F. *Scale Development: Theory and Applications* (vol. 26). Los Angeles: Sage, 2012.

Goff, P., J. Guthrie, E. Goldring, and L. Bickman. "Changing Principals' Leadership Through Feedback and Coaching." *Journal of Educational Administration,* vol. 52, no. 5, 2014, pp. 682–704.

Grissom, J.A., and S. Loeb. "Triangulating Principal Effectiveness: How Perspectives of Parents, Teachers, and Assistant Principals Identify the Central Importance of Managerial Skills." *American Educational Research Journal,* vol. 48, no. 5, 2011, pp. 1091–1123.

Grissom, J.A., D. Kalogrides, and S. Loeb. "Using Student Test Scores to Measure Principal Performance." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* vol. 37, no. 1, 2015, pp. 3–28.

Hallinger, P., L. Bickman, and K. Davis. "School Context, Principal Leadership, and Student Reading Achievement." *The Elementary School Journal,* vol. 96, no. 5, 1996, pp. 527–549.

Leithwood, K., K. Seashore, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom. "Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning." Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, 2004. Available at http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/2035. Accessed January 26, 2018.

Neumerski, C.M., J.A. Grissom, E. Goldring, T. Drake, M. Rubin, M. Cannata, and P. Schuermann. "Restructuring Instructional Leadership: How Multiple-Measures Teacher Evaluation Systems Are Redefining the Role of the School Principal." *The Elementary School Journal*, forthcoming.

Sebastian, J., and E. Allensworth. "The Influence of Principal Leadership on Classroom Instruction and Student Learning: A Study of Mediated Pathways to Learning." *Educational Administration Quarterly,* vol. 48, no. 4, 2012, pp. 626–663.

Turnbull, B.J., L.M. Anderson, D.L. Riley, J.R. MacFarlane, and D.K. Aladjem. "The Principal Pipeline Initiative in Action. Building a Stronger Principalship: Volume 5." Denver, CO: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2016. Available at https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED570472. Accessed January 26, 2018.

The Wallace Foundation. "Wallace Invests $30 Million to Strengthen Supervisors Of School Principals to Improve Their Ability to Lead Schools." Press release. New York: The Wallace Foundation, June 24, 2014. Available at http://www.wallacefoundation.org/News-and-Media/press-releases/Pages/Wallace-Invests-$30-Million-to-Strengthen-Supervisors.aspx. Accessed January 26, 2018.

APPENDIX A

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Figure A.1. The revised job description, Long Beach, 2015

JOB TITLE	TITLE OF IMMEDIATE MANAGER	TITLE OF NEXT HIGHER MANAGER
Instructional Director (Principal Supervisor)	Assistant Superintendent or Superintendent	Superintendent

Position Summary

The supervision, support and coaching of principals is the primary responsibility of an Instructional Director. This designation means that instructional directors aim to spend up to 80% of their time in school buildings, engaging in professional learning with principals or working with district staff to build support systems in service to principals. The work of the Instructional Director will be coaching based, whereby principals are coached toward effectiveness through clear expectation setting, quality communication and feedback based on a foundation of trust.

Professional Background

- Instructional Directors are leaders who have served as effective principals according to the LBUSD Principal Domains and Dimensions and who have demonstrated a rating of "Distinguished" in the Teaching & Learning domain.
- Instructional Directors have demonstrated success in raising student achievement.
- Instructional Directors have effectively supported and held staff accountable for meeting LBUSD expectations.
- Instructional Directors have demonstrated effective relationships with other principals and district staff members through their work as principal and/or district leader.
- Instructional Directors have demonstrated a deep understanding of the urban school system environment and have a proven commitment to improving student achievement and district systems to serve all students.

Key Responsibilities

1. Collaborate with all principal supervisors to ensure coherence and consistency in the implementation of the LBUSD principal evaluation system.
2. Work one on one with principals as partners to grow their instructional leadership capacity and to ensure that they have the support to attain effectiveness on the LBUSD Principal Domains and Dimensions.
3. Provide and broker high quality, research-based professional development for principals based on individual and group learning needs.
4. Collaborate with other divisions and leaders in the central office to provide and broker necessary resources and support to ensure that principals attain effectiveness on the LBUSD Principal Domains and Dimensions.
5. Act as a role model for principals in all leadership responsibilities.

JOB DUTIES

In order to support all principals in reaching effectiveness on the seven LBUSD Principal Domains and Dimensions, instructional directors (principal supervisors) will:

Teaching and Learning

- Demonstrate understanding of effective instructional practices, intervention strategies and use of assessment practices through contributions to district planning and interaction with individual and groups of principals.
- Develop and provide professional learning experiences for principals that result in principal use of new systems and/or strategies at the school site to enhance teaching and learning among classrooms.
- Reinforce teaching and learning as a primary lever of positive impact on student achievement by frequently visiting classrooms with principals and participating in problem solving that helps principals to enact high quality professional learning at their school sites.
- Coach principals to build teaching and learning systems at their school site that can be illustrated through observable actions, artifacts, documents and/or conversations with staff and students.

Environment and Equity

- Engage in complex work with principals that promotes high expectations, appreciation and continuous improvement for the principal, students and staff.
- Coach principals to identify students at the school site who are struggling, are persistently lower achieving or underrepresented and develop action plans to address students' needs.
- Support principals in developing school wide systems that ensure ALL students advance toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards and attainment of college and career readiness.

Communication and Engagement

- Model effective communication and engagement practices through high quality written and oral communication with principals and district staff including well-written supervisory documents, office communication and daily correspondence.
- Work as leaders of change in support of district initiatives, school innovation and the pursuit of positive student outcomes.
- Engage with internal and external stakeholders to promote schools' efforts to bring all students toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards through a Linked Learning approach and to exemplify the LBUSD Graduate Profile upon graduation from high school.

Supervision, Evaluation, and Employee Development

- Seek opportunities to collaborate and share leadership with principals, including encouraging principals to engage in principal meeting presentations, district or conference presentations and/or leadership opportunities specific to an individual principal.
- Act as coach and supervisor to principals, upholding the intent of LBUSD evaluation process to ensure continuous improvement among principals.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of LBUSD evaluation systems and support principals in enacting effective evaluation procedures and systems at their sites.

Professionalism, Disposition, and Ethics

- Model the attributes of an effective LBUSD leader, including demonstrating ethical actions, positive demeanor, collaborative working relationships and a connection to community agencies that support schools.
- Model a positive approach to interacting with all principals and district staff, including struggling principals.
- Exercise confidentiality and good judgment in all aspects of work.

Strategy and Planning

- Contribute to a district vision of teaching and learning, based on data and focusing on equitable access, opportunities and outcomes for all students by participating in discussion and planning with multiple departments.
- Support principals in developing a school specific instructional vision building on existing practices and student needs.
- Use data to differentiate support to principals.

Organization and Management

- Demonstrate, through daily work, that the needs of school staff is the highest priority of work.
- Establish or contribute to systems, structures and processes to ensure efficiency of daily operations.
- Support principals in making decisions about their site discretionary funds.

Table A.1. Item-level construction and reliability of Training Quality scale

Subscale	Items	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
Alignment with PSI goals	• Specifically enhanced my capacity to develop principals' instructional leadership • Helped build a learning community with my fellow principal supervisors • Provided opportunities to share specific practices with other principal supervisors in my district • Was geared toward implementing district initiatives and programs • Helped me understand district procedures	0.71
Job-embedded	• Provided opportunities for me to receive feedback on my practice • Addressed real challenges I face in my role • Gave me opportunities to plan my work • Was based on problems of practice I face in my role as a principal supervisor • Provided opportunities for self-assessment of my skills • Provided me with actionable tools, protocols, and/or learning resources that I can use in my work as a supervisor • Provided me with tools to set goals for my own development as a principal supervisor	0.89
Active/engaging	• Was engaging • Was interactive • Allowed me to model practices I learned	0.74
Overall assessment	• Taught me new knowledge or skills I didn't have • Stimulated my interest • Was part of a sustained, systematic program for my development • Facilitated my overall leadership	0.75
Scale overall		**0.94**

Source: DeVellis 2012.

Note: The study team assessed the reliability of the Training Quality scale using item responses from the second round of principal supervisor surveys, conducted in spring 2017 (N = 40 due to missing data). We measured reliability using Cronbach's alpha, a commonly accepted statistic for determining scale reliability. Coefficients above 0.90 are considered to have excellent internal consistency, those above 0.80 are good, and those at 0.70 or above are considered acceptable (DeVellis 2012).

The items are from the following survey question: "Thinking about the professional development and training for principal supervisors you attended during the 2016–2017 school year and the summer before, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

We created mean scale scores from individual items by averaging first at the supervisor level and then at the district level to create the results shown in Figure V.1. We compared these mean scale scores with factor scores and found them to be virtually identical.

PSI = Principal Supervisor Initiative.

Table A.2. Item-level construction and reliability of Principal Evaluation System Quality scale

Items	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
• The principal evaluation system is too cumbersome.[a] • There are too many indicators attached to the principal evaluation system to be useful.[a] • It is unclear how principal evaluation data are used in this district.[a] • The principal evaluation system provides actionable feedback to improve my leadership.	0.74

Note: The study team assessed the reliability of the Principal Evaluation System Quality scale using item responses from the second round of principal surveys, conducted in spring 2017 (N = 611). We measured reliability using Cronbach's alpha, a commonly accepted statistic for determining scale reliability. Coefficients above 0.90 are considered to have excellent internal consistency, those above 0.80 are good, and those at 0.70 or above are considered acceptable (DeVellis 2012).

The items are from the following survey question: "Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements, based on your experiences in the past three months:" (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

We created mean scale scores from individual items by averaging first at the supervisor level and then at the district level to create the results shown in Figure VI.6. We compared these mean scale scores with factor scores and found them to be virtually identical.

[a] Item reverse-coded for consistency.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Commissioned by: