Overview

### The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)

The primary purpose of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) is the development and support of effective school leaders. Effective school leadership is an essential factor to ensure equitable access to excellent education for all Missouri students.

In the fall 2014, a group of key stakeholders currently engaged in principal development and support were convened by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to identify the essential competencies of a transformational principal. Transformational principals are effective leaders who work with and through a broad range of stakeholders and contexts to create high quality learning opportunities for students. Transformational principals are leaders who collaborate with others to identify needed changes to enhance student learning. These main competencies of transformational leadership were clustered into 5 categories:

The Transformational Principal is…

A **Visionary**

Leader

An **Innovative**

Leader

* Develops a vision
* Implements a vision

An **Instructional** Leader

* Continues professional growth
* Actively engages in reflective practice
* Applies new knowledge understanding to drive appropriate change

A **Relational**

Leader

A **Managerial**

Leader

* Ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum
* Guarantees effective instructional practice
* Coordinates the use of effective assessments
	+ Interacts professionally with students
	+ Interacts professionally with staff
	+ Interacts professionally with family and community
	+ Implements operational systems
	+ Oversees personnel
	+ Ensures the equitable and strategic use of resources

These 5 categories, or domains, summarize the main roles a principal must assume, often times simultaneously, to effectively lead a school that is focused on instruction. Each domain is described through a particular set of competencies.

The competencies, or specific skills necessary in each role, were created and projected across the MLDS Continuum. The MLDS Continuum extends from aspiring, to emerging, to developing and then to transformational. Each level occurs throughout a principal’s career beginning with preparation.

Professional development and support are necessary to ensure a leader’s progression across the continuum indicating their mastery of the competencies at each of the four levels.

The **Principal** as the **Instructional Leader** ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

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| ***Leadership Competency #4****—Engages and supports staff to vertically and horizontally align curriculum to state/district standards (PSEL 4a,b;6d; 9i;10a,e)* |
| **Aspiring Leader** | **Emerging Leader** | **Developing Leader** | **Transformational Leader** |
| Understands standards | Examines and becomes familiar with the existing curriculum and learning standards. | Facilitates staff discussions | Ensures staff regularly |
| as they apply to horizontal | to ensure curriculum is | collaborates to |
| and vertical alignment of | comprehensive, rigorous, | continuously monitor and |
| local curricula and content | aligned, and engaging and | adjust the vertical and |
| areas. | supports continuity and | horizontal alignment of |
|  | fidelity across all grades | the curriculum to improve |
|  | and content areas. | student learning. |
| The **Distinguished Transformational Leader** coaches, trains and/or mentors others in how to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum. |

The **Principal** as the **Instructional Leader** ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

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| ***Leadership Competency #5****—Supports staff use of a varierty of research-based practices apppropriate to the intended content. (PSEL2b; 4b,c,d,e; 10a,f)* |
| **Aspiring Leader** | **Emerging Leader** | **Developing Leader** | **Transformational Leader** |
| Understands a variety of research-basedinstructional practices and how to appropriately match learning content | Identifies existing instructional practices and reinforces those that are appropriate to the learning content | Builds teacher capacity with a variety of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content | Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content |
| ***Leadership Competency #6****—Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback on teacher practice and student response. (PSEL2b; 4b,d;6a,e,f;10c,e,f)* |
| Understands and engages in meaningful feedback related to effective teacher practice | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to build teacher practice and student response | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to intentionally meet individual teacher strengths and areas for growth | Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers’ instructional practice |

There are approximately 2,200 principals and 1,300 assistant principals currently serving in Missouri schools. In addition, there is an estimated 1,100 that earn an administrator certificate each year. These active and future principals likely have mastery or partial mastery of some of the competencies at the various levels while still needing new learning and additional support to develop mastery in others. This training and support will be necessary in order to achieve the goal of having a transformational principal in every school.

### MLDS Commission, Design Team, Meetings and Members

The MLDS organizational structure is designed to deliver the training and support necessary to ensure Missouri principals master the essential competencies of the MLDS. The key components of this delivery system include:

* Governance
* Design
* Implementation by facilitators, coaches, and mentors

### Governance

The governance component of the MLDS is responsible for establishing and executing the processes of interaction and decision-making among the key stakeholders involved in training and supporting effective transformational leaders in Missouri’s schools. Governance for the MLDS is provided through two separate elements:

* + MLDS Commission
	+ MLDS Directors

The MLDS Commission is a body of 12-15 key stakeholders representing the state agency, education administration programs, professional organizations, practitioners and regional service providers. The state agency (DESE) chairs the commission. The MLDS has the following Mission and Vision:

*The Vision of the LDS is that every school in Missouri will be led by a highly effective principal*

***The Mission of the LDS is to develop highly effective school principals in Missouri by creating a leadership development system to ensure excellent school leadership in service to all students***

The MLDS Commission and MLDS Directors meet quarterly and participate in regular professional development to ensure the competencies of the system remain current and relevant and its implementation efficient and effective. The duties of the MLDS Commission, among others, include the following areas:

* + Vision, mission, values and goals that further the main focus of the MLDS and drive the development of action plans, meeting topics, agendas, etc.;
	+ A Business Plan that includes funding for the system, pricing and negotiation and ongoing investment;
	+ Human Resources for the system such as generating job descriptions for designers and implementers and selecting and acquiring directors;
	+ Communication to all key stakeholders about important topics and information like marketing, recruiting, quality, etc.; and
	+ Succession planning to maintain the integrity of the system and ensure appropriate and necessary representation.

An additional element of governance for the MLDS occurs through individuals who serve as directors for each of the levels. There is one Lead Director who oversees the Emerging Level of the MLDS. The MLDS Directors meet 4-6 times per year. These directors oversee essential functions in each of the 4 levels of the MLDS Continuum:

* + Aspiring Level – preparation phase, or pre-service, that results in an administrative certificate
	+ Emerging Level – the initial years of practice resulting in readiness for the next phase
	+ Developing Level – the subsequent years of practice after the initial years when leadership skills are further developed and refined resulting in readiness for the next phase
	+ Transformational Level – the target phase when principals possess the necessary skills and knowledge to lead schools fully responsive to the learning needs of its students
	+ The Distinguished Transformational Principal – a select percentage of principals of proven effectiveness able to coach, train and mentor other principals through the LDS continuum

The MLDS Directors report to the MLDS Commission on various areas specific to their particular leadership level of development. The specific areas of a level of the MLDS Continuum for which they oversee and are accountable include the following:

* + Lead a team of designers in creating learning content, activities and materials specific to a particular level of the system
	+ Oversee a team of implementers to ensure that quality training and support are provided to all principals on the competencies of that particular level of the system



* + Ensure consistency and alignment of training, support and implementation across the four levels of the MLDS Continuum
	+ Actively participate in the evaluation of processes and outcomes at a particular level of the system to ensure principals are successfully mastering appropriate competencies resulting in effective school leadership
	+ Regularly provide information to the MLDS Commission regarding the effectiveness of the training and support provided to principals in mastering specific competencies in that particular level of the system

The interdependent work of the MLDS Commission and Directors provide for the efficient and effective management and execution of the MLDS System in service to Missouri principals as they develop, acquire and apply essential leadership knowledge and skills necessary for the success of all students.

### Design

The design phase of the MLDS is responsible for constructing a plan for delivering training and support to principals in their efforts to master the leadership competencies for each level of the MLDS Continuum. The Design team for each level will generally consist of 10-15 individuals tasked with the following:

* + Actively participate in facilitator training to effectively deliver the learning experiences contained in this facilitator guide
	+ Develop training and support materials (e.g. articles/reading material, video, case studies, activities, tasks, tools, etc.) to assist principals in mastering competencies at each particular level
	+ Prepare those who facilitate, coach, and mentor to train and support principals in a way that ensures the fidelity of the delivery of materials at a particular level of the MLDS Continuum
	+ Participate in exercises/activities with other designers in the MLDS Continuum to ensure consistency and alignment of principal training and support
	+ Provide feedback and evaluative information to the MLDS Director for a particular level of the MLDS Continuum

High-quality models from other states and districts were gathered by the professional associations to inform the development of the domains, competencies and continuum of the LDS. Information, tools and other appropriate resources from the Rutherford Learning Group (RLG), the School Administration Manager (SAMs) Project, and other relevant research inform the learning materials that will be created for each of the four levels of the MLDS Continuum. Ongoing research will be conducted to ensure the competencies of the system remain current and relevant and its implementation efficient and effective.

The Emerging Level Design Team for the MLDS worked through a formal process in order to create six separate learning experiences for early career school administrators. A formalized process is an important step as it builds commitment while a product alone simply builds compliance. This formal design process occurred over a span of four months featuring a major work session each month.

Additional background and preparation work occurred in between each of the four major work sessions. The Emerging Level Design Team first began with an exercise in capacity mapping which identified the strengths and interests of the design team members. The team next developed a mission, vision and core values. These included the following:

**Mission** – The Missouri Leadership Development System is a comprehensive research- based program which ensures every student in Missouri will attend school with an effective confident leader by developing, supporting and refining the leadership capacity of all Missouri school principals.

**Vision** – Create a comprehensive leadership development system of learning experiences that include comprehensive, relevant and engaging treatments that will serve as a blueprint for developing and supporting transformation school principals.

**Core Values** – Equity (statewide consistency), Fidelity, Sustainability, Relevance, High Quality

### Adult Learning Theory

The Emerging Level Design Team used guiding principles as it developed treatments that would be included in various learning experiences. These guiding principles included:

**K**

**A**

**S**

**S**

**Guiding Principle 1: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (ksas)**

Knowledge, skills and attitudes combine to reflect particular characteristics necessary to do a job effectively.

**K** – knowledge: basic understanding, content

**S** – skills: can do, demonstrate, explain, coach

**A** – attitudes: based on experience, commitment to helping other grow

**Guiding Principle 2: WHY before the WHAT and HOW S**

**S**

A Learning continuum reflects a sequence of skills building from one

level of difficulty or complexity to the next. The skills are cumulative meaning current skills are added to skills learned at an earlier level.

**Awareness** – knowledge, the why, basic understanding (THEN)

**Early skill building** – modeling, practice learning, trial and error (THEN) **Advance skill building** – continuous improvement and reflection (THEN) **Leadership/Renewal** – Articulate model for others, collaboration

**Learning Continuum**

***Awareness Early Skill Building Advanced Skill Building Renewal***

**Guiding Principle 3: Designing for Sustainability**

***Expectations***

To sustain is to endure or continue. A balance between support and expectations is a necessity for optimal learning to occur.

***Support***

As expectations increase so should support.

**Guiding Principle 4: Optimal spacing of work with peers, relative experts and established experts**

Lev Vygotsky developed the Zone of Proximal Development to

describe what a learner can do with help and what they can do without help. This theory is used to optimally determine when learners should interact with peers, relative experts and established experts (Vygotsky, 1980).

***Peer***

***Peer***

***Peer***

**Learner**

***Relative Expert***

***Relative Expert***

The formal process also included clarification of the MLDS competencies. This involved “unpacking” the language of the competencies to determine their specific intent. This was important in order to ensure that treatments and learning experiences appropriately addressed the intent of the competency. The process of unpacking each of the 32 competencies involved special attention regarding:

* Essence of the competency
* Use of Nouns
* Use of Verbs
* Use of Modifiers
* Implications

### Developing Learning Experiences

Once the competencies were unpacked, they were grouped into authentic learning experiences. A learning experience is an interaction or activity in which learning takes place. Within each learning activity are various treatments. These treatments, or methods based like activities or events, were created to fully develop each of the learning experiences.

The MLDS Design Team next identified various engagement platforms. An engagement platform refers to the means by which the learner is introduced to learning. The engagement platforms included the following:

* + Regional Meetings
	+ Conferences
	+ Learning Labs
	+ District Push-In
	+ One-to-One Mentoring / Coaching
	+ Retreats
	+ Online Events
	+ Twitter Events

The various learning experiences with their treatments are delivered as training and support to principals through an engagement platform. These learning experiences were placed across a two year timeline to coincide with the Missouri requirement that new school leaders be mentored for their first two years. The two year timeline is provided on the following page.