Inquiry into instructional leadership has highlighted the need for central offices to be intentional about developing principals as instructional leaders. The extent to which a central office has established a culture of service and coherence is critical to principals serving as instructional leaders.

The Center for Educational Leadership developed the Principal Support Framework in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Leading for Effective Teaching Project. This work used research and best practice to address two key questions:

1. How are principals and central office leaders changing how they work to improve teaching performance?
2. What do principals and central office leaders need to know and be able to do to support the improvement of leadership and teaching performance at scale?

The framework is designed to support central office leaders and principals as they do the following:

- Develop a vision of what it means to support principals.
- Assess their school system’s current approach to supporting principals as instructional leaders.
- Identify strengths and key levers to build on.
- Surface technical assistance needs.
- Highlight areas for inquiry and next-stage policy development.

### Action Area 1: A Shared Vision of Principals as Instructional Leaders

The school system has defined, clearly and in detail, what it expects principals to do as the instructional leaders of their schools. It selects and evaluates principals based primarily on whether they can successfully execute those practices.

**Goal:** Principals understand the school system’s expectations for their roles and effective practices as school instructional leaders. These expectations guide the work principals perform day to day, and the practices can be sustained over time.

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| Action Area 1: A Shared Vision of Principals as Instructional Leaders | • High-priority practices of instructional leaders drive the day-to-day work of principals.  
• High-priority practices of instructional leaders drive the professional development of principals.  
• School system leaders understand and communicate both broadly and uniformly the vision of instructional leadership.  
• Newly hired principals are prepared to be effective instructional leaders.  
• Principals assess and measure their own performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices defined by their district.  
• Personnel decisions are determined by principal performance measures in alignment with high-priority instructional leadership practices. | 1. In what ways do high-priority instructional leadership practices drive principal goal setting and professional development?  
2. To what extent is principal evaluation driven by researched-based practices?  
3. How do high-priority instructional leadership practices guide candidate acceptance into the principal hiring pipeline and the selection and placement of principals?  
4. How do principals and supervisors access data on principal performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices?  
5. How does principal performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices impact retention and career ladder opportunities for principals?  
6. To what extent do principals’ calendars reflect an emphasis on high-priority instructional leadership practices?  
7. In what ways do school system leaders communicate the role of principal as instructional leader? |
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| **Action Area 2: System of Support for Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders** | • Principals receive dedicated and effective support in adopting high-priority instructional leadership practices into their day-to-day work as instructional leaders.  
• Principals receive the tools, targeted professional development and other support they need to be effective instructional leaders.  
• Principals have ownership for driving and prioritizing their own growth and improvement as instructional leaders.  
• The work of principal supervisors and other designated central office instructional staff is tightly aligned with the work of growing and developing principals as instructional leaders.  
• Principals rely on and collaborate with other principal colleagues to improve their practice. | 1. To what extent do principals receive differentiated support focused on their development as instructional leaders?  
2. How does the school system ensure that principal supervisors have the requisite skills and disposition to support principals’ growth as instructional leaders?  
3. To what extent do principals have frequent and meaningful opportunities to access and utilize each other as resources for learning and performance improvement?  
4. In what ways do principals have access to quality professional development tools and resources needed to improve their performance?  
5. How do principal supervisors collaborate with other central office staff to align systems and resources to support principals as instructional leaders?  
6. To what extent is principal supervisor evaluation tied directly to the instructional leadership success of the principals being supported?  
7. To what extent are principal supervisors able to prioritize working with principals as the day-to-day focus of their work?  
8. To what extent do principal supervisors receive the resources, support and professional development they need to successfully support principals as instructional leaders? |
| **Goal:** Principals have the skills, tools and support that they need to grow and successfully apply the system’s high-priority instructional leadership practices. | | |
| **Action Area 3: Strategic Partnership Between Central Office and Principals** | • Principals spend most of their time on instructional leadership.  
• Schools receive differentiated and integrated services rooted in an understanding of the needs of each school.  
• Central office services are designed to anticipate and proactively meet the needs of each school.  
• Central office relationships with principals add value to the work of the principal and school.  
• The central office has a culture of continuous improvement and can learn, adapt and respond to the changing needs of schools.  
• There is an efficiency created by a well-coordinated and defined set of operational systems. | 1. To what extent can central office staff articulate the connection between their work and supporting principals as instructional leaders?  
2. How does the central office provide differentiated and integrated service to schools rooted in an understanding of the needs of each school?  
3. How do high-priority instructional leadership practices and an underlying theory of action guide decisions about principal responsibility and what responsibilities are streamlined or deprioritized?  
4. To what extent are central office teams equipped with the skills and tools to do their jobs?  
5. How does the school system invest in developing the skills of central office staff?  
6. To what extent are central office staff members empowered to innovate services to better support principals as instructional leaders?  
7. How does the central office assess its performance at making it possible for principals to spend the majority of their time focused on instructional leadership? |