

October 4, 2022

**To:** County Council

**From:** Kristen Latham, Senior Legislative Analyst  
Office of Legislative Oversight

**Subject:** **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Principal Hiring, Selection and Evaluation Policies and Programs**

Leadership matters for school outcomes. A Wallace Foundation study found that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”<sup>1</sup> Principals can have a significant effect on students beyond achievement; research indicates that effective principals have led to reductions in absenteeism and exclusionary discipline. Effective principals also are able to build a productive and safe school climate, ensure marginalized students are valued, facilitate collaborative professional learning communities, strategically manage personnel and resources, and establish good communication with the school community.<sup>2</sup>

This report provides an overview of Montgomery County Public Schools’ (MCPS) hiring, assignment, and evaluation procedures and policies for principals in County schools. This report also summarizes promising practices nationwide and available information on the procedures/policies of other local jurisdictions. To prepare this report, the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) gathered information through document reviews, data analysis, and interviews with MCPS staff and other community stakeholders. This memorandum report is organized as follows:

- **Section 1** provides a summary of MCPS’ principal hiring and placement processes, available programs and supports for aspiring and current principals, and evaluation procedures for principals;
- **Section 2** is a review of research literature on emerging promising practices on the hiring and evaluation of principals, along with other local jurisdiction practices and programs;
- **Section 3** provides OLO’s conclusion;
- **Sections 4 and 5** present MCPS’ formal response to this report and acknowledgements.

The major findings of this report include:

- MCPS has numerous leadership development opportunities for staff and non-staff to become principals within the school system and to support current principals. MCPS uses a variety of methods to recruit principals and most MCPS principals are hired from within the school system.
- Formal MCPS principal evaluation is completed every one to nine years, depending upon the tenure and performance of the principal. School directors are solely responsible for the evaluation of principals unless there are performance concerns.
- Emerging best practices state that community involvement is paramount in principal hiring and selection. Several stakeholders stated that while MCPS includes community and parents in the principal

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

selection process, the process is difficult to participate in and they have little input into the selection. There is no parent/community inclusion in the principal evaluation process.

### 1. **Montgomery County Public School Principal Hiring and Evaluation Policies and Programs**

The MCPS principal hiring, placement, and evaluation processes, are a multi-tiered and involve several offices across MCPS central administration and in-school staff. This section begins by providing definitions of the office positions associated with principal hiring and evaluation, followed by a summary of the hiring process, programs available to aspiring and current principals to support leadership development, and evaluation policies. This section also provides feedback from the community on these programs and policies.

#### **A. Definitions of Relevant MCPS Offices and Positions**

This subsection summarizes relevant background on which offices and positions within MCPS are involved with principalship in MCPS, providing definitions for key roles and responsibilities. There are two primary MCPS offices responsible for the hiring, placement, and evaluation of principals in the schools, the Office of Human Resources and Development and the Office of School Support and Well-Being (OSSWB).

Office of Human Resources and Development (OHRD). The MCPS Office of Human Resources and Development provides support for all MCPS employees and those applying to work at MCPS. There are two primary offices within OHRD responsible for the hiring/selection and development of principals:

- *The Department of Human Capital Management (HCM)* is responsible for ensuring that all aspiring and current principals have required certifications. Under HCM, the Administrator and Supervisor Staffing Unit is responsible for the recruitment and part of the hiring process of principals (along with MCPS senior leadership).
- *The Department of Professional Growth Systems (PGS)* is responsible for onboarding, induction, mentoring, developing administrators. The Leadership Development Unit of the PGS builds the capacity of aspiring and new assistant principals and principal interns as well as, all employees and non-employees who are seeking administrator jobs within MCPS.

The Office of School Support and Well-Being. OSSWB is responsible for providing support and resources to schools within MCPS. OSSWB also encompasses the Department of Well-Being, Learning and Achievement. OSSWB provides professional learning opportunities, leadership development, and comprehensive and coordinated programs and services, and is solely responsible for the evaluation of school principals, completed by associate superintendents of school support and well-being (ASSSWB) and directors of school support and well-being (DSSWB).

The following provides information on various positions within MCPS that are relevant to the position of principal and are discussed throughout this report:<sup>3</sup>

- *ASSSWB and DSSWB* “supervise a portfolio of schools, special centers and programs and are responsible for coaching, holding principals accountable, and building the capacity of principals to improve teaching and learning in schools.” There are three school directors under each of the three area associate

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<sup>3</sup> Information from <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/classification/> and stakeholder interviews.

superintendents in MCPS, who are each responsible for 16-18 schools. Evaluation of principals is only one aspect of their job.

- *Principals* are responsible for “administering and supervising the total school program and providing educational leadership for the students and staff members consistent with the educational goals of the community. Functions vary by level and the unique needs of the school and include establishing a climate conducive to learning, defining roles, planning and coordinating programs, effecting change, and decision-making.” (See the Appendix for MCPS principal data regarding the number of principals at each school level by tenure, Title 1 school, and non-Title 1 school) Principals also conduct staff evaluations.
- *Assistant principals (AP)* assist with “administering and supervising the total school program and providing educational leadership for students and staff members consistent with the educational goals of the community. Functions include establishing a climate conducive to learning, planning, and coordinating programs, affecting change, and decision making.” Assistant principals also contribute to staff evaluations
- *Consulting principals (CP)* work with all first-year principals, principals who are new to MCPS or have a change in level, and administrators who are evaluated as ineffective as they enter or progress through the professional growth system. CPs are assigned for a four-year cycle, after which they return to another Administrative and Supervisory (A&S) position for which he/she is qualified.
- *Assistant school administrators (ASA)* “work with administration and staff and assists in monitoring student discipline, parent/community outreach, administering and supervising of all student-related school activities.” While both are school-based positions, the primary differences between ASAs and APs are that ASAs do not conduct staff evaluations and are on an 11-month schedule. Assistant school administrators are typically placed in schools (at all levels) with larger populations.
- *Principal interns* are MCPS staff that are aspiring principals and participating in the Principal Intern Program. If accepted into the program, interns are placed in schools as principal interns and serve in a role similar to an assistant principal, except for one month in which they serve as principal of the school.

### **B. Hiring and Placement**

This subsection summarizes the multi-phase process MCPS uses to hire and place principals within schools.<sup>4</sup> MCPS staff report there is no standard practice as to how principals are placed or moved to other positions – principals are not moved unless they apply to be moved to a different position. Staff report some MCPS principals and assistant principals will stay at a school for a long time while others will leave after a brief period.

Recruitment of Principals. Applying to MCPS for administrator jobs is open to both internal and external candidates; information on available jobs and the application process are available online. MCPS staff report that they strive to have a deep and diverse field of candidates for every available position. MCPS utilizes a variety of recruitment methods to find principals and assistant principals, including the advertisement of available positions through the MCPS website and a variety of education journals. MCPS also utilizes contacts at universities, other school systems, professional conferences, and professional organizations. MCPS also gives significant responsibility to central office and school-based administrators to identify and recruit internal employees to begin the job track to become a principal. Teachers and other employees who possess the necessary attitude, knowledge, and skills to become a principal are identified and may start the processes required to become a principal (see *Leadership Programs for Aspiring and Current Principals* on page 6).

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<sup>4</sup> Assistant principals and assistant school administrators have similar processes but are not the subject of this report.

Application Process. To qualify for a principal position in MCPS, all applications go through OHRD. OHRD screens all applications to ensure all applicants meet the following criteria for principalship applications:<sup>5</sup>

1. Letter of Interest with the impact of candidate's leadership clearly evidenced and aligned to the competencies;
2. Updated resume with the impact of candidate's leadership clearly evidenced and aligned to the competencies;
3. Reference letter from current supervisor that includes the following:
  - a. Details pertaining to the impact of leadership as outlined in the competencies;
  - b. Specific information regarding the impact of leadership on student achievement; and teacher capacity;
  - c. Data and concrete examples demonstrating impact;
4. Evidence of master's degree;
5. Scanned copy of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Administrator II certification (or the comparable state certificate);
6. Two years successful experience as an assistant principal; and
7. One current artifact demonstrating evidence of effective leadership and aligned to the competencies.

Applications must prove the candidate has the following competencies:

- A thorough knowledge of MCPS policies and procedures, the Call to Action Plan, the Program of Studies, and state and federal regulations and laws;
- Thorough knowledge of curriculum, instruction, organizational patterns, school operations, and pupil services;
- Demonstrated competence in staff selection, training, supervision and evaluation;
- Demonstrated problem-solving skills and demonstrated ability to act effectively under stress;
- Ability to motivate, encourage, and work with staff to ensure outstanding performance and good morale;
- Ability to articulate a vision for teaching and learning through leading the School Improvement Process;
- Demonstrated ability to be a highly effective instructional leader through a commitment to equity and excellence for all students;
- Ability to lead an instructional program that promotes high expectations and access to rigorous and relevant learning;
- Demonstrated commitment to the instructional program through effective implementation of the professional growth systems with fidelity;
- Shown to be highly reflective on his/her practices;
- Some experience of union collaboration to address school needs; and
- Demonstrated excellent oral and written communication skills.

If an application is completed/submitted on time and the candidate meets the screening requirements, the candidate will be put in the Pre-Qualified Principal list (PQP). The PQP is a pool of eligible candidates for MCPS principal positions. Once a candidate is placed in the PQP, he/she is in the pool for three years. Once a candidate is on this list, he/she can apply for individual school positions.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://sites.google.com/mcpsmd.net/aspiring-principals-mcps/home>

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Vacancy Determination. Individual schools within MCPS will inform the Office of Human Resources and Development that they will have a vacancy for the principalship. OHRD will then work school employees and various stakeholders to develop a job listing specifically for the school. During the establishment of a job posting, OSSWB will allow staff and families (and in high school, students) to provide input on the characteristics sought in a principal through an online survey. MCPS also conducts two informational meetings (one for staff and one for the community) providing an overview of the principal selection process.

Interviews. Once a job has been posted, principals in the PQP are able to apply for the specific job. Executive staff<sup>6</sup> will review the applications and determine who will participate in the interviews and job-embedded tasks (two written responses related to processes of being a principal).

The DSSWB is responsible for coordination of the first interview. The interview is conducted by a panel of community stakeholders, selected by MCPS. Staff report that to select the community/school representatives for the interviews, they extend the invitation to participate to all community members and staff through email. Out of those who ask to participate, MCPS staff report they select from that population based on attempting to have a diversified interview panel reflective of the school community.

The questions are determined by MCPS and provided to the interviewers. MCPS staff report that the process can take days – with each interview taking approximately half-a-day, minimum. Staff further report it can be difficult to get the community involved because of scheduling of the interviews – it requires a significant amount of time over the course of numerous workdays.

Recommendations. After the feedback from the initial interview, the Senior Leadership Team and school leadership will recommend a final candidate. That candidate will then have an interview with the Superintendent, the Area Superintendent, and the Director of OHRD or their designee. If the interviewers feel the candidate would be successful, the candidate's application is sent to the Board of Education for final approval. Once the process is over, candidates who were not selected for the position are offered feedback meetings on their applications.

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<sup>6</sup> The executive staff consists of chiefs, associate superintendents, and assistant chiefs.

**Feedback from Stakeholders on MCPS Principal Hiring**

During the course of completing this report, OLO spoke with several stakeholders (non-profit organizations, PTA representatives) and conducted an online survey through the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA). This summarizes the main theme OLO heard regarding hiring.

While MCPS states it would like community input on the principal selection process, the reality for many stakeholders is that the process is difficult and many feel like they have no influence whatsoever on the process/selection. Stakeholders feel their input is not included, and their role is unclear. Some specific issues were:

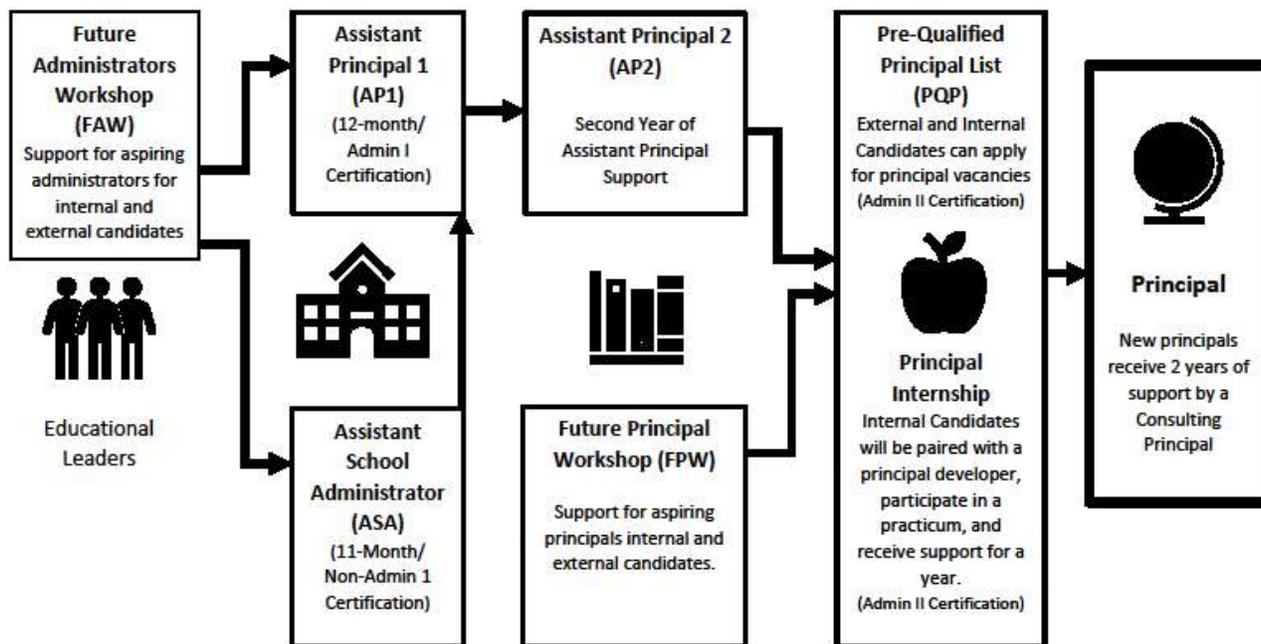
- Interviews for principals are scheduled at inconvenient times and there is not enough lead time for stakeholders to plan for participation;
- The selection process for which community members participate in the interviews are not clear;
- During interviews, the questions are pre-determined by MCPS – interviewers do not provide input into what questions are asked and cannot ask follow-up questions; and
- Interviewers cannot recommend which principal they would prefer from the candidates – there are no rankings or ratings, just submitted notes.

Some stakeholders report that the Superintendent has the authority to place a principal in any school he/she would see fit. Stakeholders state the placement of high-performing principals into low-performing schools would be beneficial to MCPS. However, stakeholders report MCPS does not currently use this practice.

**C. Leadership Programs for Aspiring and Current Principals**

MCPS provides employees and non-employees with numerous leadership development opportunities and supports. There are courses and workshops to acquire skills and knowledge about being a principal, along with offers to work closely with current and former principals. This subsection summarizes the resources MCPS provides for those seeking to be a principal or those new to the position. It is important to note that aspiring and current principals can utilize these available resources. To provide some context to some of these programs, the chart below summarizes the MCPS principal pipeline.

Chart 1. MCPS Principal Pipeline



Note: All AP1, AP2, and Principal Interns receive support through the Leadership Development Cohort Program, which includes an assigned coach, professional development through monthly seminars, and support from a Professional Development Team.

Source: “[Leadership Development Unit](#)” by MCPS

**Pre-Application Workshops.** MCPS’ Leadership Development Unit holds multiple workshops for those interested in becoming administrators (central or in school). The Future Administrator Workshop (for teachers, assistant principals or assistant school administrators) and the Future Principal Workshop (for assistant principals or those who have some principal experience) both outline the requirements and processes associated with applying for these positions.

These sessions are available to both internal and external potential candidates. To advertise for internal candidates, MCPS sends a memo to all principals and information is shared in the staff bulletin. These sessions are recommended (but not required) for those who want to apply for a position within MCPS administration. MCPS staff report most people who apply for a principalship in MCPS have gone through one or both workshops.

**Principal Intern Program.** MCPS’ Principal Intern Program is for internal MCPS assistant principals and central service administrators who have successfully completed two or more years as an assistant principal and would like to become a principal. If accepted into the program, principal interns are placed at a school to serve as an assistant principal. Those selected are given the opportunity to improve their leadership skills and prepare themselves for the rigors of principalship. They also become part of a cohort with other interns and are provided with a coach, workshops, and other supports throughout the year.

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Principal interns work with OHRD and MCPS school directors to determine what type of school/location the intern would like to work and is placed appropriately (the current principal also must be willing to working with an intern). If there is currently an assistant principal at that school, that AP will be moved to another location.

During the internship, principal interns act as assistant principals for most of the year at their “home school.” During one month of the school year, the principal of the “home” school will temporarily move to another school, after which the principal intern will become the principal of the “home” school. Principal interns are interns at the school for one year, after which the candidate can apply for principalships, remain at the school as an assistant principal, or apply for another administrative job.

As an intern, a candidate is entered into the Pre-Qualified Principal pool (PQP). Candidates do not have to be a principal intern to become an MCPS principal; however, most do. MCPS staff report that of the latest PQP list, 19 of 21 principal candidates had completed the internship program.

*OLO requested data from MCPS on the Principal Intern Program and MCPS responded that since the 2016-2017 school year, there has been 36 elementary school principals hired from within the MCPS Principal Intern Program and 18 secondary school principals (does not include FY22 hiring season). In addition, there are 11 acting elementary school principals and 3 acting secondary school principals hired from within the program.*

The Novice Administrator and New-to-Assignment Assistance. MCPS provides several supports for principals new to the position. First, MCPS conducts an orientation for employees new to administrative and supervisory positions. This series of modules provides an overview of central services and school-based administrative roles, including professional development opportunities, the professional development planning (PDP) process, and evaluation policies and procedures.

All new principals are assigned a consulting principal (CP) who are new to MCPS, new in general, new to school level. The purpose of the CP is to provide support for the principal (client). The CP is responsible for coaching and mentoring the client. The CP provides direction with regard to the supports that are available from within MCPS and from outside sources. The CP is responsible for the following:

- Making frequent visits with informal support;
- Analyzing problems and suggesting options; and
- Identifying resources for the client principal.

Novice administrators (staff who are in the first year of an administrative position, either school-based or in the central office) must attend a comprehensive training and development program to ensure the administrator has a full understanding of the standards, has opportunities to practice leadership skills, and becomes knowledgeable about the expectations of the position. OHRD coordinates this training program but novice principals are also supported by a team, including supervisory staff from the Office of School Support and Well-Being and professional development staff from the Office of Human Resources and Development.

New-to-assignment and new-to-MCPS administrators (staff who make a change in school level, moves from school-based to central office, or moves from central office to school-based administrator) are supported through training and support from the individual administrator’s supervisor, a mentoring program (see below), and ongoing seminars about leadership and management topics.

Mentoring. The Leadership Development Unit has established a formal mentoring program within the Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth System (A&S PGS) that provides a one on-one relationship

between a mentor and a mentee, along with a series of seminars with other mentees. The mentor provides overall leadership development; some of the specific topics that may be covered by the mentor and/or the seminars include:

- Understanding the standards for administrators and supervisors;
- Feedback on the mentee's development;
- Discussing concerns of the mentee;
- Answering questions about policies, procedures, and work situations;
- Sharing strategies about effective implementation of routines and processes; and
- Developing skills to meet the various needs of stakeholders and developing relationships.

If a staff member wants a mentor, he/she will contact the OHRD (with approval from supervisor); mentors are then selected through a collaborative process among the mentee, the direct supervisor of the mentee, and OHRD. Mentors can include consulting principals, peers, associate superintendents, directors, supervisors, or someone external to MCPS. The following groups of staff are eligible for mentoring support:

- Novice administrators;
- Administrators new to MCPS;
- Aspiring principals;
- Administrators seeking mentoring through the Professional Development Planning process;
- Administrators linked with mentors through the evaluation and supervision process;
- Administrators new to a school level; or
- Administrators new to a central office position.

### **D. Evaluation of MCPS Principals**

The goal of the A&S PGS is to have principals meet standards. Principal strengths are acknowledged and nurtured, and areas of need are documented, with principal provided support and resources to address identified needs and improve performance. Throughout the process, the principal is an active participant.

Formal evaluations of MCPS principals are completed solely by the school directors (with review by associate superintendent, others get involved if there are concerns regarding a principal's performance). While there are ten standards utilized as the basis for evaluation, no principal is evaluated the same. Because each principal is unique, directors use a variety of methods to evaluate performance.

MCPS does not have any formal methods for principal evaluation from parents, staff or the community (i.e. surveys, etc.). MCPS staff report that if a parent, community member, or staff have an issue with a principal, they can first contact the principal with the issue and then contact MCPS central administration.

The remainder of this subsection provides a simplified summary of the MCPS principal evaluation process.

**Frequency.** The following table summarizes the formal evaluation regularity for administrators in MCPS.

Administrators	Frequency of Evaluation
New to MCPS or new to administration	First two years of administration
Change in assignment (change in position classification)	"Out of cycle" for one year and then return to regular cycle
Becoming APs or interns	During years in training program
Newly approved AP or principal interns	"Out of cycle" for first two years as principals to return to regular cycle
New to principalship	"Out of cycle" for one year and then return to regular cycle
Principal intern becomes an assistant principal	No evaluation in first year, unless changing levels

More specifically, principals have the following evaluation schedule:

- First and second year as an MCPS principal;
- First year after a change of level and then return to cycle;
- Fifth year;
- Ninth year; and then
- Every fifth after the ninth year.

MCPS staff report all staff are on a cycle specific to them, and it ranges from one to five years. MCPS staff further stated some principals undergo formal evaluation more often than the above schedule if there are performance concerns. Also, principals may have to complete a Special Evaluation at any point (see page 15).

**Evaluation Standards.** In 2013-2014, the State of Maryland implemented a teacher and principal evaluation system statewide. The state established ten standards and each County district was required to construct evaluation models for teachers and principals based on those standards along with local interests and priorities.<sup>7</sup> The ten standards are listed in the chart below.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/professionalgrowth/final-as-pgs-handbook-2021-22.pdf>

**State of Maryland Principal Evaluation Standards**

VISION & LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

STANDARD I: MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES. The principal is an educational leader who develops, advocates, and enacts a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

STANDARD II: ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL NORMS. The principal is an educational leader who acts ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

STANDARD III: EQUITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS. The principal is an educational leader who strives for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

STANDARD IV: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT. The principal is an educational leader who acts as an agent of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

TEACHING & LEARNING

STANDARD V: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT. The principal is an educational leader who develops and supports intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

STANDARD VI: COMMUNITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS. The principal is an educational leader who cultivates an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

STANDARD VII: PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL. The principal is an educational leader who develops the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

STANDARD VIII: PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF. The principal is an educational leader who fosters a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

STANDARD IX: MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY. The principal is an educational leader who engages families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

STANDARD X: OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT. The principal is an educational leader who manages school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

MCPS has defined these standards within its Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth System (A&S PGS). In the A&S PGS handbook, each standard is further defined by performance criteria and descriptive examples of what a principal might be doing to meet a specific standard. The standards also describe what a principal would be doing to be evaluated as “highly effective,” “effective,” or “ineffective” (described in more detail in the next section).

**Ratings.** As part of the statewide evaluation standards, the state also requires evaluations be based on a holistic view of the evidence regarding a principal’s performance on all ten standards. Ratings are required to be “highly effective,” “effective,” or “ineffective.” MCPS has created the following ratings; there are examples of what performance in each of these ratings entails.<sup>8</sup>

- A “Highly Effective Principal” meets all ten standards and “consistently initiates and engages in self-motivated leadership practices to foster meaningful collaboration and distributive leadership that promote equitable academic outcomes and well-being for every student.”
- An “Effective Principal” meets all ten standards but has an identified area for growth. Similar to highly effective, an effective principal is one who “initiates and engages in self-motivated leadership practices to foster meaningful collaboration and distributive leadership that promote equitable academic outcomes and well-being for every student.” The slight difference is that highly effective “consistently” does this.
- An “Ineffective Principal” does not meet one or more of the ten standards and inconsistently implements a school vision and/or demonstrates limited to inadequate improvements in response to the support provided by the principal supervisor.

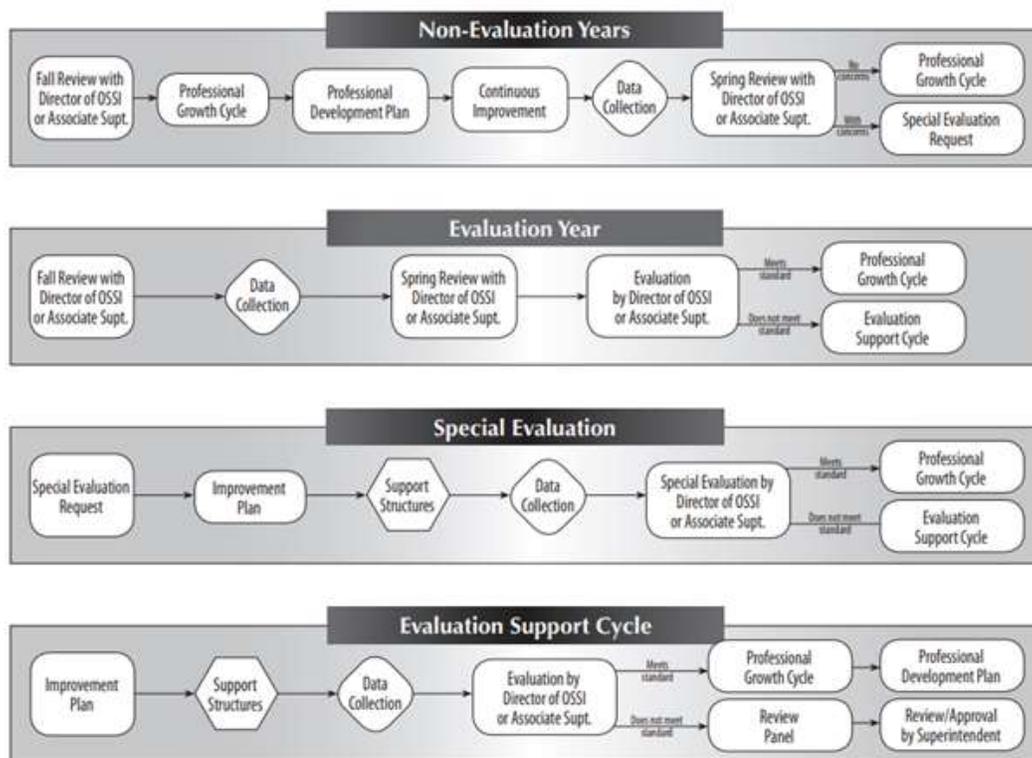
**Evaluation Process.** The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requires principals be evaluated annually on professional practice and student growth, with evaluation data submitted by local school systems. Submitted evaluation models are required to provide, at a minimum, overall ratings of “highly effective,” “effective,” and “ineffective.” MCPS submits varying evaluation data to MSDE, depending upon what type of evaluation the principal completed in that year.

The chart below summarizes the various evaluation cycles for principals in MCPS (from the PGS A&S Handbook), followed by more detail on each process. As discussed earlier, principals are on various cycles, depending upon tenure and performance. Formal evaluations occur every one to nine years, depending upon the individual teacher; informal evaluations occurs whenever it is not a formal evaluation year. Special evaluations and the Evaluation Support Cycle are utilized when there are concerns about a principal’s performance.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/professionalgrowth/final-as-pgs-handbook-2021-22.pdf>

**Diagram 2. Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth System  
Evaluation Process for Principals**



Source: MCPS PGS A&S Handbook

Non-Evaluation Years/Professional Growth Year/Off-Cycle Year. During non-evaluation years (or professional growth years), the school director has, at minimum, a fall review and a spring review with the principal. These meetings are used to set goals, review goals, and review performance in relation to the ten standards and school improvement process. MCPS directors report they meet with principals in off-cycle years several more times than the required two times.

Additionally, between formal evaluation years, each administrator will create, in consultation with their direct supervisor, a Professional Development Plan (PDP) for continuous improvement. During formal evaluation years, an administrator is not required to create a PDP.

If this annual review finds there are no concerns with the principal’s performance, the principal continues in the Professional Growth Cycle. MCPS will submit the principal’s Student Learning Objects and “meets standard” rating to MSDE to meet the state’s evaluation requirement.

If the director has concerns regarding the principal’s performance during the year, the director will meet with the principal, discuss the concerns, and document the meeting. The director documents the concerns and conducts two formal observations.<sup>9</sup> After these observations, the director may request a special evaluation. As part of the special evaluation, the principal and director will develop an improvement plan, which identifies

<sup>9</sup> What constitutes an observation can vary based on individual principals; some examples include shadowing a principal for a period of time or attending a parent meeting.

needs, outlines additional support provided, establishes a timeline, and determines the performance measures by which the principal is expected to achieve an “effective” rating. At the end of the established timeline, if the director finds the principal has met the goals, the principal will continue in the professional growth cycle.

If the director determines the principal did not meet the goals of the improvement plan, the associate superintendent will complete an observation before the principal receives the final Special Evaluation document. If the principal’s performance is still rated as “ineffective” after the associate superintendent review, he/she is placed in the Evaluation Support Cycle for the next school year (described on the following page).

Formal Evaluation Year. Formal evaluations of principals are based on the ten standards and other performance criteria.<sup>10</sup> During these years, school directors will (in conjunction with the principal) complete observations, gather information/artifacts, and review data. The director will have a meeting at the beginning and one at the end of each school year to review goals and progress in the principal’s professional development plan, Student Learning Objectives, and the school improvement process. In addition, the director will collect data from:

- *Observations.* Directors must conduct a minimum of two formal observations (one during each semester). MCPS staff report that directors complete more observations per year (often 10-15 over the course of the school year). Examples of formal observations and visits include staff meetings, special education meetings, or PTA events. Formal observations require that the principal has full knowledge of the observation, and the written report is shared with the right of the principal to respond. If there are principal performance concerns, one formal observation must be done by the associate superintendent.
- *Artifacts.* Principals must provide one artifact/claim of evidence for each of the ten standards.
- *Collection of Data:* The director will collect and analyze, in conjunction with the principal, a variety of required data sources as a part of the evaluation including the following:

<b>Required Data Sources</b>	<b>Optional Data Sources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Improvement Process Plan (SIP);</li> <li>• Student Learning Objective (SLO);</li> <li>• Professional Development Plan;</li> <li>• State and local student assessment data;</li> <li>• System of Shared Accountability Data; and</li> <li>• Staff profile, including, but not limited to, turnover, diversity, attendance, and experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local school parent, student, and staff surveys;</li> <li>• Principal’s use of MCPS parent, student, and staff surveys; or</li> <li>• Principal’s Portfolio, which is a variety of data sources describing their performance collected by the principal.</li> </ul>

Once a formal evaluation is completed, the following are the potential results. The evaluation, along with the SLOs are sent to MSDE as required by state law.

- If the principal meets the standard, the principal continues in the Professional Growth Cycle (and continues their regular evaluation cycle or an expanded evaluation cycle – more years between formal evaluations).
- If the principal receives an “ineffective” rating,” they will enter the Evaluation Support Cycle.
- The school director can also request a special evaluation.

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<sup>10</sup> A copy of the formal evaluation form is available in the Appendix.

Special Evaluation. A special evaluation occurs when a director requests that a principal be evaluated outside of the regular evaluation cycle. It is requested when there are serious deficiencies in the principal's performance on the ten standards. Once a special evaluation is requested, an improvement plan is created, additional supports are put in place, and the school director and associate superintendent conduct increased observations. During the special evaluation, the principal is assigned a consulting principal, who assists the principals by conducting two formal observations with post conferences after the director has determined that the principal is not meeting standard. The consulting principal then presents his/her findings to the PAR Panel.

After a specified amount of time, the director and associate superintendent complete the special evaluation, which can result in a referral to the Evaluation Support Cycle (discussed next), or return to the regular Professional Growth Cycle. MCPS staff report that special evaluations take longer than the standard evaluation.

Evaluation Support Cycle. When a principal receives an "ineffective" rating in their formal evaluation, he/she will enter the Evaluation Support Cycle. The goal of this intervention is to provide assistance and opportunities to the principal in order to lead effectively according to PGS standards. There are three key participants in the Evaluation Support Cycle (other than the principal):

- Consulting Principal (CP)<sup>11</sup>: Each principal in the Cycle is assigned a consulting principal, who provides mentoring, direction, and support. The CP supports by:
  - Making frequent visits with informal support;
  - Analyzing problems and suggesting options;
  - Identifying resources for the client principal;
  - Conducting a minimum of two formal observations with post-conferences;
  - Providing written reports on the formal observations to the client and the associate superintendent;
  - Communicating with the director regarding the client's progress; and
  - Submitting quarterly reports to the director and the PAR Panel (see below) on supports provided to the principal and the principal's progress on the improvement plan.
- The Director: The director will monitor progress on the improvement plan through quarterly observations and meetings with the principal.
- The Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Panel: The PAR Panel consists of the coordinating director, two directors not assigned to that principal, and three principals recommended by the Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAAP). This Panel receives at least quarterly updates from the associate superintendent and the CP on the progress of the principal on the improvement plan and can make suggestions for support. The Panel is responsible to make the final recommendations to the superintendent on the status of the principal at the end of the Evaluation Support Cycle.

The Evaluation Support Cycle begins when a principal who is not currently in the PAR program is given an "ineffective" rating on the formal evaluation report. OHRD notifies the PAR Panel and assigns a consulting principal. The CP then completes a review of that principal's skills on the Leadership Standards, including:

- Meeting separately with the school director and the principal;

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<sup>11</sup> The CP is an experienced principal in MCPS and hired for the position of CP for a three-year term. At the end of the three-year term, the CP will return to a principal position or another administrative position for which they are qualified.

- Completing a minimum of two formal observations (one announced and one unannounced); and
- Reporting the information and makes a recommendation to the PAR Panel.

The CP provides an overview of the report to the PAR Panel, which then decides on inclusion or non-inclusion in the program and notifies the principal and director of the decision. The principal can appeal the decision and then make a presentation to the PAR Panel to provide additional information, after which the director can present additional information and documentation.

After the presentation, the PAR Panel will affirm or negate the “ineffective” evaluation and will recommend inclusion or non-inclusion in PAR. If non-inclusion is recommended, the principal is determined to be “effective” and the formal evaluation is revised to reflect that. The principal then returns to the regular evaluation cycle.

If the PAR Panel recommends inclusion in the PAR program, the principal is assigned a CP. The CP, the school director, and the principal collaborate on the development of an improvement plan that will include the identification of the specific areas of need, the expected improvements, the support that will be provided by the CP and the director, and the specific data that will be used to determine effectiveness. The CP and director consistently check in on the principal throughout the year.

Once the timeline established in the plan is complete and the school director and CP agree that the principal has met standards, the principal will return to the Professional Growth Cycle. If the director and the CP agree that the principal has not met standards or they could not agree if the principal met standards, there is a presentation to the PAR Panel. After reviewing all information and data, the PAR Panel will make one of the following recommendations to the superintendent:

- The principal returns to the Professional Growth Cycle.
- The principal is reassigned to another administrative position.
- The principal is reassigned to a non-administrative position. Principals who are tenured as teachers in MCPS are still tenured for teaching positions when dismissed from A&S positions.
- The principal is dismissed from MCPS.

In the year following successful return to the Professional Growth Cycle from PAR, the principal will have a Special Evaluation to ensure maintenance of skills. If the principal’s skills are rated as “ineffective” in the next school year, the PAR Panel will reconsider the case.

*OLO requested the data on the number of principals that have gone into the Peer Review Panel system in recent years. The following is MCPS’ response: “All new principals and principals who are transitioning from one level to another are automatically included into the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program. The PAR program is also designed to support the growth and development to any principal or administrator who are exhibiting elements of underperformance. Due to the high profiles of these positions and the fact that the number of principals or administrators include into the PAR program are low, any specific data shared can result in the possible identification of staff members.”*

### Feedback from Stakeholders on MCPS Principal Evaluation

During the course of completing this report, OLO spoke with several stakeholders and conducted an online survey through the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA). Two main themes emerged from this feedback regarding principal evaluation.

- **Parents/school community would like to have some input in the evaluation of principals.** Currently, many school community members feel there is no mechanism to share feedback on the principal, positive or negative. This is especially concerning for those who feel their principal is not a good fit for the school and they are unaware of any available processes to discuss with MCPS administration. Some feedback included wanting to bring back community school surveys MCPS used to issue to parents for feedback on the principal.
- **There were some concerns about how seemingly few principals are “put on probation” or dismissed.** Stakeholders reported that it appears as if all principals always meet expectations and principalships are “lifetime appointments.” Stakeholders want more clarification on how MCPS deals with non-performing principals.

## 2. Emerging Best Practices and Local Practices for Principal Hiring and Evaluation

Research indicates principals can directly and indirectly affect student learning through their leadership practices. Some common conclusions across studies indicate the following practices are associated with increased student achievement and high-performing schools:<sup>12</sup>

- Creating and sustaining an ambitious, accepted vision and mission for organizational performance;
- Engaging deeply with teachers and data on issues of student performance and instructional quality;
- Efficiently managing resources including human capital, time, and funding;
- Creating physically, emotionally, and cognitively safe learning environments for students and staff;
- Developing strong and respectful relationships with parents, communities, and businesses; and
- Acting in a professional and ethical manner.

### A. Literature Review on Best Practices

This report focuses on principal hiring/selection and evaluation. The research on best practices in these areas is limited; however, the following briefly summarizes emerging practices for both:

#### Principal Hiring Emerging Practices<sup>13</sup>

- Understand and review national and state-level standards for professional practice, competency tests for principals, and established criteria for principal career portfolio assessments.
- Establish a consistent and reliable search committee.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858419850094>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Hiring\\_Quality\\_School\\_Leaders\\_0.pdf](https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Hiring_Quality_School_Leaders_0.pdf)

- Conduct a blind review of applications to reduce biases. Reviewers should have the same information about each candidate, use the same rating form, and submit responses independently.
- Conduct interviews to acquire a more holistic view of candidates.
- Require finalists to visit the school and include authentic tasks (i.e., student data reviews, building walk-throughs, and teacher observations) and interviews with other stakeholders.
- Invite community members and businesses to meet and interview finalists and provide input into the hiring decision.
- Allow adequate time to complete hiring process and do not make quick or emotional decisions.

### **Principal Evaluation Emerging Practices<sup>14</sup>**

- Involve principals and other constituents in the evaluation processes.
- Provide the principal with useful, valuable, and trustworthy data to advance principals' abilities to be more effective leaders within their schools and communities.
- Connect to a broader approach to leadership development and should support leadership human capital management systems. Data from performance evaluations can be used to design professional development and induction systems, shape hiring procedures, improve working conditions, develop incentives, and inform other human resource processes that support leaders.
- Align with teacher and other educator performance assessments.
- Include multiple rating categories to differentiate performance and performance level.
- Utilize multiple performance measures to gain more holistic view.
- Communicate results to principals consistently and with transparency - data from evaluations should be clear, pointed, and actionable.
- Include training, support, and evaluation of principal evaluators.

### **B. Review of Local Jurisdictions' Hiring, Professional Development Programs, and Evaluation Practices**

This subsection summarizes information OLO was able to identify on the Internet for three local jurisdictions – Fairfax County, Virginia and Prince George's and Howard Counties in Maryland. Each summary includes any information OLO was able to find on the system's hiring and selection process, any leadership development programs, and evaluation policies.

**Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).** FCPS is the largest school system in Virginia, serving over 185,000 students in Fairfax County and Fairfax City.<sup>15</sup> This section summarizes any information OLO was able to find on the Internet about the system's principal hiring and evaluation processes.

*Hiring.* The FCPS principal hiring process<sup>16</sup> first starts when principal candidates apply to the FCPS Principal Pool. To be eligible for the Pool, candidates must hold a Postgraduate Professional License with endorsements in administration and supervision preK-12, plus have seven years of progressively more responsible experience in teaching and administration or supervision; with a minimum of three years administrative experience. Out-of-state candidates need to take the school leaders licensure assessment prior to admittance into the pool.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858419850094>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fcps.edu/careers/career-opportunities/administrative-opportunities/principal-selection-process>

Candidates need to upload a current resume and responses to two essay prompts:

- As a leader, how have you addressed issues of equity in your school(s)? How did you identify a need for change and initiate a process for implementation? What were the outcomes?
- In your work experiences, what specific communication strategies have you initiated to engage the community around critical issues? Whom did you involve and why? Be specific in your examples and describe the outcomes.

Both documents are screened and assessed by the Human Resources Administrative Hiring team using a performance matrix. Applicants selected are required to participate in an online assessment, which is then assessed using a performance matrix. Finally, applicants selected to move forward participate in a half-day session on-site with FCPS leaders and will complete a teacher observation task, a complex scenario task, and an interview. Both tasks and interview are assessed by members of the FCPS's leadership team and experienced principals using a performance matrix.

If a candidate is selected to move forward after this session, the candidate is placed into the Principal Pool. Once in the Pool, candidates are then allowed to express interest in/apply for specific school vacancies. If selected for a school panel interview: Candidates will hear from the Department of Human Resources and will participate in the following school panel interviews:

- 1) Predetermined questions developed from community and staff input; and
- 2) Questions developed with panel members at the conclusion of Part 1.

If selected from the school panel interview to move forward, the candidate will interview with the region leadership team and the superintendent's leadership team for final determination.

Professional Development Programs. OLO was able to identify the following leadership development programs within FCPS<sup>17</sup>:

- *Accelerated Certification Cohort* is a partnership with the University of Virginia and enrolls FCPS educators to work toward a Virginia license in education administration. Licensure is granted after the successful completion of a one-year, non-credit program.
- *Administrator Development Cohort* is a series of guest speakers (leadership team members and experienced principals) for participants to gain knowledge of practical information that can be immediately applied.
- *Aspiring Principals Cohort* provides opportunities to develop the skills and disposition to assume the role of principal for experienced school-based administrators who have demonstrated the skills, knowledge, and desire to become a principal.
- *Principal Induction Program (PIP)* is for new and experienced principals who are new to their schools and provides opportunities for colleagues to collaborate on topics such as: finance; cultural proficiency; communications; mission and vision; human resource management; and instructional leadership.

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.fcps.edu/node/33163#:~:text=This%20eight%2Dmonth%20program%20provides,these%20emerging%20issues%20and%20needs.>

## MCPS Principal Hiring, Selection, and Evaluation Policies and Programs

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- *School Based Administrator Induction Program (SBAIP)* is a program to support new school administrators in their first year of service and provides support on managing student discipline, human resources, school finance, communications/community relations, and special education.

Evaluation. FCPS evaluates its school-based administrators using a performance matrix based on each of seven standards, summarized below. FCPS also provides information with examples of what a highly effective leader does.<sup>18</sup> OLO was not able to find any information on who is responsible for these evaluations or how they are completed.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fcps.edu/careers/career-opportunities/administrative/principal-selection-process/performance-evaluation-program>

## MCPS Principal Hiring, Selection, and Evaluation Policies and Programs

FCPS Standard	Examples of Criteria
<p><b>Instructional Leadership</b> - fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to student academic progress and school improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develops and implements a school improvement plan that results in increased student academic progress for all populations within the school.</li> <li>- Selects instructional programs that meet specific school needs.</li> <li>- Works with teams to develop Strategic and Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound, and Rigorous (SMARTR) goals promoting student academic and/or program progress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Climate</b> - fosters the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involves students, staff, parents, and the community in creating and sustaining a positive, safe, and healthy learning environment.</li> <li>- Develops and/or implements best practices in behavior management that are effective within the school community.</li> <li>- Develops, revises, and implements a school safety plan that manages crisis situations in an effective and timely manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Human Resources Management</b> - fosters effective human resources management by assisting with selection and induction, and by supporting, evaluating, and retaining quality instructional and support personnel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively participates in the selection process and assigns highly effective staff in a fair and equitable manner based on school needs, assessment data, and local, state, and federal requirements.</li> <li>- Manages the supervision and evaluation of staff in accordance with division and state requirements.</li> <li>- Provides a mentoring process for all new and targeted personnel, as well as cultivates leadership potential.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organizational Management</b> - fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and use of resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishes and enforces rules and policies to ensure a safe, secure, efficient, and orderly facility and grounds.</li> <li>- Identifies organizational, operational, or resource problems; deals with them in a timely, consistent, and effective manner.</li> <li>- Plans and prepares a fiscally responsible budget to support the school's mission and goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication and Community Relations</b> - fosters the success of all students by communicating &amp; collaborating effectively with stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disseminates key information to staff, parents, and stakeholders in a timely manner and through multiple channels and sources.</li> <li>- Maintains visibility and accessibility to students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders.</li> <li>- Provides a variety of opportunities for parent and family involvement in school activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professionalism</b> - fosters the success of all students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manages and resolves conflict in a respectful and timely manner.</li> <li>- Engages in professional development, including conferences, networking, mentoring, peer observations, and self-evaluation.</li> <li>- Creates a culture of respect, understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation for students, staff, and other stakeholders and models these attributes on a daily basis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student Academic Progress</b> - leadership results in acceptable, measurable student academic progress based on established standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboratively develops, implements, and monitors the school improvement plan.</li> <li>- Sets benchmarks and implements appropriate strategies and interventions to accomplish desired outcomes.</li> <li>- Provides evidence that students are meeting measurable, reasonable, and appropriate achievement goals.</li> </ul>

**Howard County Public Schools System (HCPSS).** HCPSS serves approximately 60,000 students. This section summarizes any information OLO was able to find on the Internet about the system’s principal hiring and evaluation processes.

*Hiring.* OLO did not find much information about the HCPSS principal hiring process. The limited information found outlines that the system creates an applicant pool each year for school-based administrators. Applicants for principalships must provide all information necessary to confirm that he/she meets the minimum qualifications for the position, including a complete application form, an updated resume, a cover letter addressing any specific requirements for the position, and three professional references. External applicants must provide all educator certification documents (Maryland and/or out-of-state certificates, transcripts, and test scores) and internal applicants must submit a copy of his/her MSDE certificate and a qualifying School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) score (if they he/she is not currently a principal).

After submission, applications are reviewed by the Office of Human Resources. Applications that best meet the position qualifications are referred to an interview selection committee for further evaluation and consideration for an invitation to interview.

*Professional Development Programs.* OLO found very limited information about programs for leadership development. OLO found the following statement on leadership development on the HCPSS website<sup>19</sup>, “Please check back in the early fall for information on seminars for aspiring principals and assistant principals.” However, OLO identified the following programs from the HCPSS Leadership Development Twitter:<sup>20</sup>

- *The Leadership Fellows Program* is for staff who has had two years as either an assistant principal or leader in central administration. It is a yearlong professional development program that enhances leadership skills, mindsets, knowledge, and beliefs.
- *School-based Leadership Cohort* is a program designed for teachers and those assuming other school-based leadership roles who are seeking to enhance their leadership capacity in their current role and explore future leadership opportunities.
- *Aspiring Assistant Principal Seminars*, which provide information on the application process, including timeline, how to prepare an application, and strategies for interviews.

*Evaluation.* In Howard County, school-based administrators are evaluated on a two-year cycle.<sup>21</sup> In a full evaluation year, administrators are evaluated on both professional standards and student growth broken down as follows: professional standards comprise 80% of the total evaluation score (40% for Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, 20% for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction or School Improvement, and 20% for another standard the administrator chooses) and student growth component comprises 20% of the evaluation. If rated Highly Effective or Effective in Year 1, the administrator is evaluated in Year 2 using Year 1’s professional standards rating and Year 2’s student growth data. If rated Ineffective in Year 1, the administrator is evaluated on both professional standards and student growth in Year 2.

Evaluations are completed by community superintendents. Each year, there is a beginning of the year conference in which the administrator and community superintendent review the school improvement data and plan, student growth target, and professional standards. At the mid-year conference, the principal reflects on

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.hcpss.org/employment/admin-careers/seminars/>

<sup>20</sup> [https://twitter.com/hcpss\\_leaderdev](https://twitter.com/hcpss_leaderdev)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ctacusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HowardCounty-NextStepsForward.pdf>

progress with professional standards and student learning objectives, and the community superintendent provides feedback. At the end of the year conference, the principal submits artifacts related to professional standards and student learning objective attainment. The community superintendent provides feedback on and shares the final evaluation rating.

In 2018, HCPSS underwent an independent evaluation on its teacher and administrator evaluation systems.<sup>22</sup> Some key findings regarding administrators were:

- School-based educators generally believe the evaluation system provides common expectations and language.
- Administrators and teachers have substantial differences of opinion on whether the evaluation system is having a positive impact on their instructional practices or student learning.
- In both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, all principals and almost all teachers in the district were rated Highly Effective or Effective.
- Educators feel there is significant inconsistency in the expectations for and the use of the artifacts process.
- Many educators question the value of the artifacts process. Their experience with artifacts undermines their perceptions of worth of the evaluation system.

**Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS).** PGCPS serves approximately 135,000 students.<sup>23</sup> This section summarizes any information OLO was able to find on the Internet about the system's principal hiring and evaluation processes.

**Hiring.** The PGCPS' Office of Human Resources manages the principal selection process.<sup>24</sup> To begin, OHR completes an initial prescreening (including qualifications review and two readiness assessments). A committee comprised of representatives from Human Resources, Academics, and School Leadership will then develop an eligible candidate pool based on the candidates' credentials, experience, and scores obtained from the leadership exercises.

When a specific school vacancy is announced, OHR will conduct a feedback forum with school staff and the community to share the principal selection process and gather feedback to develop the school leadership profile. Information regarding leadership needs of the school community is collected from a School Community Survey. The survey asked community members to prioritize attributes for a school leader from the following list:

- Maintains Continuity;
- Make Changes Based Upon Needs;
- Involves Parents;
- Provides Instructional Leadership;
- Is Accessible;
- Maintains a Positive School Culture;
- Maintains Staff Balance;
- Promotes High Student Expectations;
- Communicates Well;
- Has Effective Interpersonal Skills;
- Utilizes Resources;
- Exercises Participatory Leadership;
- Promotes Professional Growth; or
- Is Forward Thinking.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ctacusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HowardCounty-NextStepsForward.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.pgcps.org/about-pgcps>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.pgcps.org/humanresources/>

Once the school leadership profile is complete, candidates selected will undergo two interviews:

- First round interview with instructional leadership teams (instructional directors, academic supervisors, and OHR supervisors). Interview questions are developed by community panel members with the help of an instructional director.
- Second round interview is with representatives from Human Resources, Associate Superintendent(s), applicable Instructional Directors, four educators including the school FAC representatives, two support staff, two PTA members and two community members.

If a candidate is recommended from these two interviews, he/she will have a one-on-one interview with the CEO of the school system. The CEO will consider recommendations from the first and second committees when making the selection for school vacancies; the CEO is not required to select an individual from the recommended candidate list provided.

Once the CEO makes a recommendation, the name of the candidate selected is forwarded to the Board of Education for approval. The CEO can (1) place a candidate in an acting position up to six months (180 days) prior to making the candidate permanent or (2) select a candidate outside the scope of this procedure based on the needs of the school system, including the discretion to make instructional leadership transfers.

Professional Development Programs. OLO was able to identify the following programs<sup>25</sup> in PGCPSS for principals:

- *Aspiring Leaders Program* provides leadership development opportunities for qualified teacher leaders who are actively seeking their first assignment as assistant principal. Candidates need to have four years of successful teaching experience, a relevant master's degree, Advanced Professional Certificate, and an Administrator I Certification. This program will assist selected individuals in developing the skills and competencies needed to "successfully plan, implement and monitor instruction, maintain a safe and orderly environment, and manage available resources and personnel in preparation to assume the role and responsibilities of an assistant principal."
- *Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS)* is a leadership program for Assistant Principals who aspire to become principals. ALPSS guides a cohort of leaders through face-to-face sessions, shadowing, and mentoring opportunities to prepare them to become PGCPSS school leaders. Candidates must be a current PGCPSS Assistant Principal for a minimum of three years, have a Framework for Teaching certification, and receive recommendations from current Principal and Instructional Director. ALPSS is an 8-month formal program aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and includes a combination of face-to-face sessions and mentoring opportunities. All selected participants are expected to apply for a principalship and PGCPSS continues to offer support to ALPSS cohorts after the formal program concludes.
- *Assistant Principal Induction Program* supports first and second year Assistant Principals. This yearlong program provides a variety of experiences including: a monthly training program, an assigned coach who is a former PGCPSS administrator, and inclusion in a wrap-around leadership development team.
- *Comprehensive Principal Induction Program* is a two-year program where newly appointed principals are provided the following: a monthly training program aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders during the first year; an assigned Leadership Development Coach, and an assigned National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) Certified Principal Mentor who will attend the monthly meeting with the protegee.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.pgcpss.org/offices/humanresources/professional-learning-and-leadership>

*Evaluation.* OLO was able to find limited information on the evaluation of principals in Prince George’s County. The PGCPs’ Office of Employee Performance (OEP) is responsible for the evaluation of staff within the system.<sup>26</sup> The school-based administrator evaluation model is a 70/30 model – Professional Practice comprises 70% of the final evaluation and Student Growth comprises the remaining 30%. The Professional Practice component is based on the following Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL):

- *Standard 1.* Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- *Standard 2.* Ethics and Professional Norms
- *Standard 3.* Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- *Standard 4.* Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- *Standard 5.* Community of Care and Support for Students
- *Standard 6.* Professional Capacity of School Personnel
- *Standard 7.* Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
- *Standard 8.* Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
- *Standard 9.* Operations and Management
- *Standard 10.* School Improvement

The Student Growth component consists of the following two categories:

- *Quantitative Measure (5 points)* - providing targeted Student Growth documentation during the Beginning-of-Year, Mid-Year, and End-of-Year Conferences. The quantitative measure will be scored during the End-of-Year-Conference.
- *Qualitative Measure (25 points)* - providing in-depth discussion and reflection during the Beginning-of-Year, Mid-Year, and End-of-Year Conferences. Scoring of the qualitative measure will occur at all three conferences.

### **3. Concluding Discussion**

The principal is the leader of a school and sets the tone and culture for staff, students, and the community. The hiring, selecting, and evaluating of these positions in MCPS are multi-tiered processes involving numerous central administration offices. While MCPS does include the community in the selection process for principals, numerous stakeholders OLO spoke with reported that the process was difficult and cumbersome to navigate. Many felt, while they were participants in the process, they did not believe their opinions or concerns mattered. Several expressed concerns there is no staff or community input into the evaluation of principals; particularly if the school community does not believe the principal is a “good fit,” there is no recourse.

OLO acknowledges that MCPS has been working with community members to make these processes more accessible. However, OLO recommends the Council engage in discussions with MCPS staff and community stakeholders on how to continue to improve these processes and ensure that community input and concerns are heard and valued.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.pgcps.org/offices/humanresources/employee-performance>

### 4. Acknowledgements

OLO would like to thank the stakeholders who provided information and insight for this report:

#### Montgomery County Public Schools

- Kecia Addison, Director, Shared Accountability
- Gary Bartee, Director, Leadership Development Unit
- Jimmy D’Andrea, Former Chief of Staff
- Cheryl Dyson, Associate Superintendent, School Support and Well-Being
- Dana Edwards, Chief of District Operations
- Eric Guerci, Assistant to Chief of Staff
- James Koutsos, Associate Superintendent, School Support and Well-Being
- James McCoy, Human Resources and Development
- Sean McGee, Director, School Support and Well-Being
- Diane Morris, Associate Superintendent, School Support and Well-Being
- Helen Nixon, Chief, Human Resources and Development
- Ruschelle Reuben, Chief of School Support and Well-Being
- Nicole Sosik, Director, School Support and Well-Being
- Yolanda Stanislaus, Director, Department of Professional Growth Systems

#### Other Stakeholders

- Edward Amatetti, Montgomery County Taxpayers League
- Shirley Brandman, Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence
- Gordie Brenne, Montgomery County Taxpayers League
- Sue DeGraba, Montgomery County Taxpayers League
- Byron Johns, Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence
- Jennifer Martin, President Montgomery County Education Association
- Travis B. Simon, Director of Political and Legislative Affairs SEIU Local 500, CTW, CLC
- Cynthia Simonson, President Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations

### 5. Montgomery County Public Schools’ Response

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) shared final drafts of this report with staff from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). OLO appreciates the time taken by MCPS staff to review the draft report and provide technical feedback and corrections.

The written comments received from MCPS are attached in their entirety on the following pages.

September 16, 2022

Dr. Christopher A. Cihlar, Director  
Office of Legislative Oversight  
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. Cihlar:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Office of Legislative Oversight's (OLO) Report 2022-10 on Principal Hiring, Selection, and Evaluation, providing feedback from stakeholders. The responses to this feedback are noted, along with additional background information and actions to be taken to address these findings.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to ensuring a great leader is in every school. A Wallace Foundation study found that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, helping the field understand the importance of school leaders and successful leadership."<sup>1</sup>

MCPS implements a comprehensive process to announce, interview, select, supervise, and evaluate school principal leaders. This process is one that honors our commitment to collaboration and communication across multiple community stakeholder groups. We honor this commitment by providing multiple methods to solicit input and feedback on the characteristics sought in the principal, recruiting a broad representation that honors the diversity of the school community on the interview panel, and capturing feedback on candidates through an open and transparent dialogue at the conclusion of the interviews. Ultimately, the intention of this multi-tiered process is to select a principal that has the skills, knowledge, and character to support the success of every student and family in the school community. This interview process helps us make the best match, and ultimately the best recommendation to the Board of Education for appointment.

**Theme:** The selection process for which community members participate in the interviews is not clear.

**MCPS Response:** The initial step in the principal hiring process is the written communication to the school community, detailing information regarding two avenues through which students, staff, and community members may provide feedback relative to the skills and character desired

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf>

in the next principal. The initial avenue for input is through a principal characteristic survey disseminated to the community. The second is a community meeting facilitated by the director of school support and well-being, during which the director outlines the interview process, defines the manner in which the interview panel is developed, and shares the explicit role the interview panel plays in advising or providing input for recommendations for the second round of interviews.

At the community meetings, the director also will share that panels are comprised of five to six parents and five to six staff members who match the racial demographics of the school community to ensure that a range of perspectives are represented by staff, families, and school system leaders, and to honor MCPS' core value of equity. The diversity of the panel plays a significant role in the selection process.

**Theme:** Interviews for principals are scheduled at inconvenient times and there is not enough lead time for stakeholders to plan for participation.

**MCPS Response:** At the outset of the principal hiring process, a timeline is developed for the dates of the community meeting, community panel interview, and the Board of Education meeting at which the principal will be recommended for appointment. This information is shared at the community meeting to provide advance notification to allow community members to determine their availability to serve on the panel. Interviews commonly are scheduled during the school day to accommodate student and staff participation. MCPS also has moved to utilizing a virtual platform for interviews, thus increasing the convenience for panel members.

**Theme:** The OLO report expresses that community members have little influence on the process.

**MCPS Response:** The MCPS principal interview and hiring process is a multi-tiered process that produces valuable data utilized to select the best candidate to serve as the principal in a specific community. The value of the data produced by the community through the principal characteristics survey, feedback during the community meeting, and anecdotal data from the debriefing at the conclusion of interviews is significant. We believe that the process capitalizes on the diverse perspectives and interests that make up our school communities, and we value the time and energy that our parents/guardians and community members devote to this process

Each member of the interview panel provides a valuable perspective, and is afforded the opportunity to share in detail what resonated and what questions remained about each candidate. MCPS takes great pride in the partnership we have with school communities in regard to the principal interview and hiring process. This voice data is captured by a representative from the Office of Human Resources and Development, and thoroughly is reviewed by the administrative leadership team as a key data point in determining which candidates move forward.

Following the appointment and announcement of the new principal, the Office of School Support and Well-Being plays an active role in supporting the transition of the new principal. This support is provided through the planning and facilitation of community and staff meetings, utilizing the associate superintendent and director's contextual knowledge of the school and community

to connect the new principal with key stakeholders, and the development of the 90-day entry plan that outlines the specific actions the principal will take to develop relationships, assess the strengths and needs of the school, and begin to develop a shared vision with all school community stakeholders.

We want to thank you for the most recent report and MCPS looks forward to collaboration with the Council to continue and strengthen this shared commitment of the selection our of principal leaders in serving our school community to ensure the best education for all of our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Monifa B. McKnight".

Monifa B. McKnight, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

MBM:PKM:SFM:PAP:RR:pbr

Copy to:

Dr. Murphy  
Dr. Marks  
Dr. Pugh  
Ms. Reuben

## Appendix

### **MCPS Principal Data**

The following table summarizes the current tenures of principals in MCPS schools (as of March 2022), provided by MCPS OHRD. For all three levels of schools, most principals split tenures of 0-5 years and 6-14 years.

	Number of Principals by Tenure			Total
	0-5 Years	6-14 Years	15+ Years	
<b>Elementary Schools</b>				
<i>Title 1</i>	16	16	3	35
<i>Non-Title 1</i>	46	38	17	101
<b>Middle Schools</b>				
<i>Title 1</i>	1	1	-	2
<i>Non-Title 1</i>	19	13	6	38
<b>High Schools</b>				
<i>Non-Title 1</i>	11	10	4	25
<b>Special Schools</b>	5	-	-	5

## APPENDIX B

	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Final Evaluation Report: Principals</h3> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth System</b> <b>Office of Human Resources and Development</b> MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Rockville, Maryland</p>	<p style="margin: 0;"><b>MCPS Form 430 69</b> <b>October 2018</b> <b>Page 1 of 2</b></p>
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Principal Name _____		MCPS Employee Number _____	
Years of MCPS Administrative Experience _____		School(s) _____	
Years of Administrative Experience _____			
Director of Learning, Achievement, and Administration _____			
Type of Evaluation			
<input type="checkbox"/> First-year Principal	<input type="checkbox"/> Second-year Principal	<input type="checkbox"/> New to MCPS	
<input type="checkbox"/> Veteran	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Change in Level	

**Directions:** Evaluators complete a narrative description of the principal's performance based on the leadership standards listed below. The narrative includes a context paragraph, background information, and data that is listed and gathered as stated in the evaluation process for principals.

Dates of Observations	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dates of Conferences	_____	_____	_____	_____

Final Rating  Highly Effective  Effective  Ineffective

**A Highly Effective Principal: Meets all 10 standards:**  
A principal who consistently initiates and engages in self-motivated leadership practices to foster meaningful collaboration and distributive leadership that promote equitable academic outcomes and the well-being for every student. A principal who consistently communicates and implements a school vision with high expectations for school leadership that is ethical, equitable, and results in school improvement. A principal who consistently develops school leadership to respond to school needs from a data-driven lens.

**An Effective Principal: Meets all 10 standards with an identified area for growth:**  
A principal who initiates and engages in self-motivated leadership practices to foster meaningful collaboration and distributive leadership that promote equitable academic outcomes and well-being for every student. A principal who communicates and implements a school vision with high expectations for school leadership that is ethical, equitable, and results in school improvement. A principal who develops school leadership to respond to school needs from a data-driven lens.

**An Ineffective Principal: Does not meet 1 or more of the 10 standards:**  
A principal who inconsistently implements a school vision. A principal who inconsistently and/or rarely initiates a response without direction from the principal supervisor. The principal demonstrates limited to inadequate improvements in response to the support provided by the principal supervisor.

Evaluator's Signature _____	Date _____
Principal's Signature _____	Date _____

**Vision and Leadership Expectations:**

**Standard I: Mission, Vision, and Core Values**—The principal is an educational leader who develops, advocates, and enacts a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

**Standard II: Ethics and Professional Norms**—The principal is an educational leader who acts ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

**Standard III: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**—The principal is an educational leader who strives for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

**Standard IV: School Improvement**—The principal is an educational leader who acts as an agent of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

## APPENDIX B CONTINUED

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### Teaching and Learning

**Standard V: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**—The principal is an educational leader who develops and supports intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

**Standard VI: Community of Care and Support for Students**—The principal is an educational leader who cultivates an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

**Standard VII: Professional Capacity of School Personnel**—The principal is an educational leader who develops the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

**Standard VIII: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff**—The principal is an educational leader who fosters a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

### Meaningful Engagement

**Standard IX: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community**—The principal is an educational leader who engages families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

### Operations and Management

**Standard X: Operations and Management**—The principal is an educational leader who manages school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

**Narrative Description:** Evaluators complete a narrative description containing a context paragraph, background information and data sources used for the evaluation.

**Directions:** Write at least one claim statement followed by several examples of supporting evidence for each of the A&S standards under each of the corresponding four MCPS themes.

### Vision and Leadership Expectations:

### Teaching and Learning

### Meaningful Engagement

### Operations and Management