



# PRINCIPAL SUPPORT FRAMEWORK



CENTER *for* EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON • COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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The Principal Support Framework describes the partnership between school system leaders and principals that is critical for eliminating the inequities that exist in schools. Equity-driven school leaders develop school communities in which every student, particularly those furthest from justice, consistently has experiences that result in their social, emotional and academic well-being. A system that organizes around these goals must work differently to foster school leadership for equitable experiences and outcomes. Based on research and informed by CEL's experience with school systems across the country, this framework offers a vision for how central office leaders can improve the conditions and support for growing equity leadership practices across their systems.

## The 4 Action Areas

1

### ACTION AREA 1

**Foster an inclusive leadership culture focused on creating equitable experiences and outcomes**



2

### ACTION AREA 2

**Co-create a shared vision of principals as leaders of equitable schools**



3

### ACTION AREA 3

**Create a system of support for principals to grow as leaders of equitable schools**



4

### ACTION AREA 4

**Develop a strategic partnership between the central office and principals**



# 1

## ACTION AREA 1

### Foster an inclusive leadership culture focused on creating equitable experiences and outcomes

**System leaders create and grow a culture in which all stakeholders see themselves as a team of learners and problem-solvers with agency and accountability for student growth and development.**

#### IMPACT

**System leaders create the conditions for, model and sustain ways of learning and working that allow school leaders to lead equitable school communities on behalf of all students, and especially those furthest from justice.**

#### THE VISION

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to the system's vision for equitable student experiences and outcomes by ensuring sponsorship throughout the system.
- Develop self-awareness and identify biases by reflecting on personal beliefs and lived experiences, and by examining one's own marginalized and privileged identities.
- Build authentic and trusting relationships with members of the school system and local community, particularly those with different lived experiences.
- Model courageous leadership by naming issues of inequity, race, dominant culture and structural racism both inside and outside the organization.
- Collaborate with members of the broader community, especially those furthest from justice, to routinely analyze and revise structures, policies and practices that uphold institutional racism and other systemic inequities.
- Create structures and processes that sustain inclusive, student-centered decision-making, planning, learning and feedback.



#### Guiding Questions

- 1 What are the current characteristics of equity leadership in the central office? How is this described by different stakeholders?
- 2 How do system leaders build understanding and agency towards a vision of equity?
- 3 How does equity leadership practice in the central office inspire and compel others in the system to interrupt inequities? How do system leaders create the conditions and remove the barriers for school leaders to be courageous on behalf of students?
- 4 In what ways do system leaders advance and demonstrate active listening, empathy, trust and mutual respect?
- 5 To what extent do central office leaders privilege a sense of belonging, significance and agency for school leaders? Other educators? Students? Families and community?
- 6 How do system leaders create the conditions for courageous conversations about systems, policies and practices that perpetuate inequities? How do they respond when challenged on issues of equity, bias and structural racism?
- 7 How are system leaders supported and engaged in their own learning and reflection about equity, bias and structural racism?



# 2

## ACTION AREA 2

### Co-create a shared vision of principals as leaders of equitable schools

**System leaders collaborate with the school community to define clearly what practices and dispositions they expect from principals to lead for equitable student experiences and outcomes.**

#### IMPACT

**A collaboratively developed vision drives the work of school leaders and shapes how system leaders cultivate, develop, place and retain principals.**

#### THE VISION

- Engage the school system community in developing a shared vision of high-priority equity leadership practices.
- Broadly and consistently develop understanding of leadership practices that create equitable student experiences and outcomes.
- Provide professional learning for aspiring and current principals centered on research-informed, equity leadership practices.
- Cultivate, hire, place and retain a diverse school leadership corps using anti-bias criteria and inclusive processes.
- Design inclusive processes for principal placement that match school leaders with the unique assets and goals of a school and its broader community.
- Create the conditions for principals to assess and measure their own performance in relation to the vision for leading equitable school communities.



#### Guiding Questions

- 1 How do history and culture shape leadership expectations? What potential biases need attention in creating a shared vision for leading equitable schools?
- 2 To what extent does the vision for equity leadership practice emphasize privileging student voice and experience? How does it support leading for student social, emotional and academic development?
- 3 How does a theory of action for principal professional learning balance system and school priorities in alignment with the vision of high-priority equity leadership practices?
- 4 How do system leaders inclusively communicate, develop and reinforce expectations for leaders of equitable school communities?
- 5 How do system leaders establish equitable mindsets, policies, and practices that improve the ability to attract, hire, place and retain a diverse corps of equity-driven school leaders?

# 3 ACTION AREA 3

## Create a system of support for principals to grow as leaders of equitable schools

**System leaders create a coherent approach to help principals continuously develop knowledge, mindsets and practices for equity leadership.**

### IMPACT

**Principals develop their practice in a growth-oriented system that provides differentiated resources, experiences and support to lead equitable school communities.**

### THE VISION

- Respond with the tools, differentiated professional learning, job-embedded coaching and other supports principals need to be able to apply high-priority equity leadership practices.
- Ensure principals experience professional learning that is coherently aligned to high-priority equity leadership practices.
- Model leading through an equity lens by ensuring professional learning, coaching and collaboration identifies inequities, addresses root causes and ultimately disrupts their existence.
- Foster principal ownership of their own growth and improvement as equity-driven leaders.
- Develop and sustain structures for principals to collaborate to improve practice and rely on each other as support and resources.
- Ensure principal supervisors are organized and work as part of a research-based approach to developing school leaders.

### Guiding Questions



- 1 How do leaders seek and use varied data on student learning and student experience to identify inequities and design principal professional learning to disrupt those?
- 2 How do principal professional learning opportunities ensure that intended changes in leader practice are responsive to the social, emotional and academic well-being of students in their schools, particularly those students furthest from justice?
- 3 In what ways do system leaders support school leaders to pursue personal growth, professional growth and connect with each other as resources for learning, reflection and improvement?
- 4 How well does principal professional learning support examination of personal identities, experiences and biases that influence their collective leadership?
- 5 In what ways do high-priority equity leadership practices drive principal goal-setting? To what extent do principals receive differentiated support focused on their development as leaders of equitable schools?
- 6 How do system leaders ensure that principal supervisors develop the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions—and prioritize time appropriately—to support an equity-driven principal's growth?

# 4 ACTION AREA 4

## Develop a strategic partnership between the central office and principals

**System leaders develop effective, integrated processes and services from the central office that ensure the primary role of principals is leading equitable schools.**

### IMPACT

**Principals are intentionally supported to develop equitable school communities, strengthen learning and teaching environments, build collective leadership and manage resources through an equity lens.**

### THE VISION

- Design central office services to proactively understand, anticipate and respond to the context of each school.
- Provide schools with differentiated and integrated services rooted in an understanding of the strengths and goals for each school, particularly focusing on students furthest from justice.
- Take an asset-based approach to systemwide planning involving schools, their leaders and the communities they serve.
- Strengthen relationships within the central office that enable collaboration on behalf of school leaders and the creation of equitable schools.
- Develop and sustain a culture of continuous improvement in the central office that promotes learning, adapting and responding to the context of schools and communities.
- Analyze, reflect and act on ways the actions of the central office perpetuate institutional racism, promote inequitable practices and establish barriers to addressing inequities.

### Guiding Questions



- 1 How well can central office staff explain the connection between their work and supporting principals as equity-driven leaders?
- 2 To what extent do central office leaders privilege the voice and experiences of students, particularly those students who are the furthest from justice, in their support of schools?
- 3 How do members of the central office learn about the assets, goals and context of schools – and use that knowledge to inform the design of differentiated and integrated services?
- 4 How do high-priority equity leadership practices and an underlying theory of action for supporting principals inform what central office leaders and team members do and don't ask of principals?
- 5 In what ways do central office staff assess how well they make it possible for principals to focus time on leading for equitable experiences and outcomes for students?
- 6 How do school system leaders invest in developing the skills, mindsets and dispositions of an equity-driven central office staff?
- 7 To what extent are central office staff members empowered to innovate or continuously improve services to better support principals?