

## Fact Sheet #7- Performance Standard 7: Professionalism

### PROFESSIONALISM

*The leader fosters the success of students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.*

#### What does *professionalism* mean?

In general terms, professionalism is defined as “the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person.”<sup>1</sup>

#### What does research say about professionalism?

School leaders set the standard for professionalism in the school building and the community. This includes demonstrating professional standards and engaging in ethical behavior. As role models for teachers and staff, they engage in continuous professional development and contribute to the profession.

Wurtzel outlines tenets of professionalism and applies them to teachers. They are equally appropriate in describing principal professionalism. A professional:

- owes his/her primary duty to their clients;
- is accountable to the profession for results;
- has a duty to improve his/her own practice;
- has a duty to improve common or collective practice in the profession;
- adheres to a body of specialized knowledge, agreed-upon standards of practice, and specific protocols for performance; and
- is expected to exercise professional judgment.<sup>2</sup>

**Professional Standards.** The school leader has numerous duties and responsibilities; they continue to increase and change rapidly. The job has become increasingly complex. Compounding this complexity are the national, state and local accrediting and governing bodies that have each established their own performance standards and guiding principles.

The result is multiple standards which can confuse or even contradict one another.<sup>3</sup>

Leading performance standards for the principalship (school leaders) should support and complement the multi-faceted role of school leaders. The Leader Assessment on Performance Standards and the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards are complementary. Moreover, the Leader Assessment on Performance Standards and Council of Chief State School Officers standards are also complementary. When school leaders adhere to and demonstrate the professional standards set forth in the Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System, they can be assured that they are practicing professionalism and acting as role models to the school and larger community.

**Ethical Behavior.** School leaders serve as role models, providing the moral purpose for their schools.<sup>4</sup> Moral purpose can be defined as “social responsibility to others and the environment.”<sup>5</sup> In an educational environment, the school leader has a responsibility to students, staff, and the larger school community. First and foremost is the responsibility to behave ethically.

A survey of 180 K-12 educators found a correlation between effective leadership and ethical decision making. Survey respondents ranked honesty and integrity as the most important characteristics educators value in leaders.<sup>6</sup> Effective principals are fair and honest, have integrity, and expect to demonstrate ethical behavior.<sup>7</sup> They share their ethical beliefs with faculty, staff, parents, and students.<sup>8</sup>

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**Professional Development.** To hone skills and continue to evolve in the highly skilled profession of school principalship requires continuous professional development. In a study that focused on why good principals stay in the profession, professional development was key.<sup>9</sup> These principals viewed and described themselves as life-long learners.

When comparing effective professional development programs with those that are less so, LaPointe and Davis found that effective principals attended more professional development and found the sessions to be more helpful. They were also more likely to attend professional development along with their teachers, and were almost twice as likely to make visits to other schools. These principals were also more likely to participate in development networks with other principals, to mentor other principals, and to be willing to observe and critique fellow principals.<sup>10</sup>

Research findings about principal professional development includes:

- Effective principals recognize the importance of professional development.<sup>11</sup>
- Effective principals participate in a variety of professional development activities. These include attending conferences, networking with others, mentoring other principals, and observing other principals.<sup>12</sup>
- Research-based professional development programs providing what principals need to be successful are now available.<sup>13</sup>

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### Sample Performance Indicators for the Professional Knowledge of Leaders

- Models respect, understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation.
- Works within professional and ethical guidelines to improve student learning and to meet school, district, state, and federal requirements.

- Maintains a professional appearance and demeanor.
- Models self-efficacy to staff.
- Maintains confidentiality and a positive and forthright attitude.
- Provides leadership in sharing ideas and information with staff and other professionals.
- Works in a collegial and collaborative manner with other leaders, school personnel, and other stakeholders to promote and support the vision, mission, and goals of the school district.
- Demonstrates the importance of professional development by providing adequate time and resources for teachers and staff to participate in professional learning (i.e., peer observation, mentoring, coaching, study groups, learning teams).
- Evaluates the impact professional development has on the staff/school/district improvement and student achievement.
- Assumes responsibility for own professional development by contributing to and supporting the development of the profession through service as an instructor, mentor, coach, presenter and/or researcher.
- Remains current with research related to educational issues, trends, and practices.
- Maintains a high level of technical and professional knowledge.
- Fulfills contractual obligations and assigned duties in a timely manner; participates in other meetings and activities in accordance with district policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam Webster Learning Dictionary, (ND). Retrieved from <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/assessment>

<sup>2</sup> Wurtzel, J. (2007). The professional, personified: Districts find results by combining a vision of professionalism with the use of common tasks and goals. *Journal of Staff Development*, 28(4), 30-35. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>3</sup> Catano, N. (2002). *Content analysis of principal job descriptions and principal evaluation instruments of K-12*

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*public education in Virginia*. Doctoral dissertation, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

<sup>4</sup> Lashway, L. (2003) *Role of the school leader*. Eugene, OR: College of Education, University of Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16–20.

<sup>6</sup> Kaucher, E. (2010). Ethical decision making and effective leadership. *ProQuest LLC*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>7</sup> Lashway, 2003; Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

<sup>8</sup> Beck, L. G., & Murphy, J. (1994). *Ethics in educational leadership programs: An expanding role*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press; Fullan, M., Bertani, A., & Quinn, J. (2004, April). New lessons for district-wide reform: Effective leadership for change has 10 crucial components. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7), 41-46.

<sup>9</sup> Boris-Schacter, S. & Merrifield, S. (2000). Why particularly good principals don't quit. *Journal of School Leadership*, 10, 84–98.

<sup>10</sup> LaPointe, M., & Davis, S. H. (2006). Effective schools require effective principals. *Leadership*, 36(1), 16-38.

<sup>11</sup> Boris-Schacter, S. & Merrifield, S. (2000). Why particularly good principals don't quit. *Journal of School Leadership*, 10, 84–98; Kythreotis, A. & Pashiardis, P. (1998a). The influence of school leadership styles and culture on students' achievement in Cyprus primary schools. Nicosia: University of Cyprus.

<sup>12</sup> Drago-Severson, E. (2004). *Helping teachers learn: Principal leadership for adult growth and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press; Fink, E., & Resnick, L. B. (2001). Developing principals as instructional leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(8), 598-606; LaPointe & Davis, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Waters, T., & Grubb, S. (2004). *Leading schools: Distinguishing the essential from the important*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/LeadershipOrganizationDevelopment/40051R\\_LeadingSchools.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/LeadershipOrganizationDevelopment/40051R_LeadingSchools.pdf)

**Georgia Department of Education  
Leader Keys Effectiveness System**

**Leader Self-Assessment Checklist  
Performance Standard 7: Professionalism**

Quality		Level IV	Level III	Level II	Level I
Professional Standards	Adheres to and demonstrates the professional standards set forth in the Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System.				
Ethical Behavior	Serves as a role model for ethical behavior.				
	Shares ethical beliefs with faculty, staff, parents, and students.				
	Carries out duties with competence and integrity.				
Professional Development	Views professional development as ongoing and continuous.				
	Participates in a variety of professional development opportunities.				
	Networks with other principals to provide support.				
	Willingly participates in peer observations.				
	Visits other schools.				