



# Pilot Task 1 Candidate Assessment Handbook

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# Introduction

School leaders have the ability to create a school with equitable achievement goals and expectations, respectful and trusting relationships among the adults and the students, and effective programs and practices—a place where all students can attain academic knowledge and skills, understand and value self, understand and value others, and engage with the world. Leaders base their work on their leadership knowledge; skills and dispositions; evidence and research; and the commitment of staff, families, and the community. Research clearly indicates that leaders who incorporate anti-racist practices into every aspect of their work yield benefits for **all** students. Furthermore, this work is critical for students from historically underserved communities and groups.<sup>1</sup> To help ensure that school leaders are effective, all candidates seeking principal/assistant principal licensure in Massachusetts must meet state licensure assessment requirements.

Toward that end, the Commonwealth has supported the development and implementation of the Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL). The PAL assessment system is designed to produce clear evidence of a candidate’s readiness for full responsibility of an initial school leadership position. It is aligned with other Commonwealth leadership development efforts to prepare, support, and evaluate principals and assistant principals.

The system is also aligned with the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval regulations (603 CMR 7.00), which were amended and approved by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on February 28, 2023.

Furthermore, PAL is aligned with the national performance assessment requirements of the [Educational Leadership Constituent Council \(ELCC\), as enumerated in its national accreditation program standards](#) and with the national educational leadership policy standards, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration’s Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), 2015.

Specifically, the four tasks that comprise the PAL system are aligned with the revised Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership, initially approved by the Board in

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<sup>1</sup> Additional resources can be found in the Guidelines, which reference the following: (1) Banks, J.A., et al. (2001). Seattle, WA: Center for Multicultural Education, College of Education, University of Washington; (2) Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/559.310>; (3) Grissom, J.A., Egalite, A.J., & Lindsay, C.A. (2021). *How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

December 2011. In addition, the tasks incorporate anti-racist leadership competencies that were added to the [Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders](#) in 2021.

The revised Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders are designed both to reflect recent research confirming the important role of school and district leaders and to disrupt historical patterns of racial inequity and promote success for all students. Anti-racist leadership competencies were added to the Guidelines to enable program completers to become anti-racist leaders who understand and embody anti-racist competencies, strategies, and mindsets. Anti-racist leadership helps ensure that each and every student can thrive in rigorous, culturally responsive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environments supported by high-quality curricular materials and evidence-based practices.

Current research and literature confirm the importance of school leaders to student success in PreK–12 schools. To achieve equity or to implement equitable practices, school leaders must ensure that all students receive high-quality curriculum and evidence-based instruction. Research demonstrates that student learning is accelerated when administrative leaders ensure that all students have access to high-quality, culturally responsive, and standards-aligned curricula and all educators are provided professional learning and support to implement those curricula (TNTP, *The Opportunity Myth*, 2018).<sup>2</sup> School leaders need to develop the skills to reflect on their actions, ideas, and assumptions to become effective in their roles.

### **What Is an Intentional Equity Pause?**

**As you work on the four tasks, you will be presented with equity pauses for various components. Each pause includes several questions meant to prompt reflection on your actions and, just as importantly, the ideas and assumptions behind your actions.**

**Given the myriad responsibilities school leaders encounter each day, it is critical that they focus their attention consistently on closing opportunity gaps, improving well-being, and ensuring equitable learning outcomes for all students. One purpose of equity pauses is to help candidates understand how their attitudes, words, actions, and decisions impact teaching and learning by affecting all dimensions of school culture.**

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<sup>2</sup> TNTP. (2018). *The opportunity myth: what students can show us about how school is letting them down—and how to fix it*. [https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP\\_The-Opportunity-Myth\\_Web.pdf](https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf)

**Furthering equity of opportunity in schools demonstrates a belief in the abilities of all students. By focusing attention on matters of equity, educators demonstrate that they are willing to confront challenges, improve their own practice, and make positive change in the lives of those they serve.**

**For a definition of the term *equity pause*, see page 63 in the following document published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:**

**[Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook \(www.doe.mass.edu\)](http://www.doe.mass.edu)**

Definitions of terms related to equity and anti-racist competencies are included in the [glossary](#). Candidates are encouraged to review these terms prior to beginning the PAL tasks.

## Overview of PAL Assessment Tasks

The Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL) allows candidates to demonstrate their leadership knowledge and skills by setting the direction for improving equity in student learning, creating a professional learning culture among school staff, assessing and supporting individual educator instructional practices, and engaging families and community in improving student learning. The work for each task is to be undertaken in a school setting with guidance and direction from a supervising practitioner or school leader. Tasks can be completed as part of the principal candidates' coursework or fieldwork/internship experiences. Accomplishing the following four specific tasks allows candidates to exhibit their leadership competency:

Task 1: Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement

Task 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture

Task 3: Leadership in Observing, Assessing, and Supporting Individual Educator Effectiveness

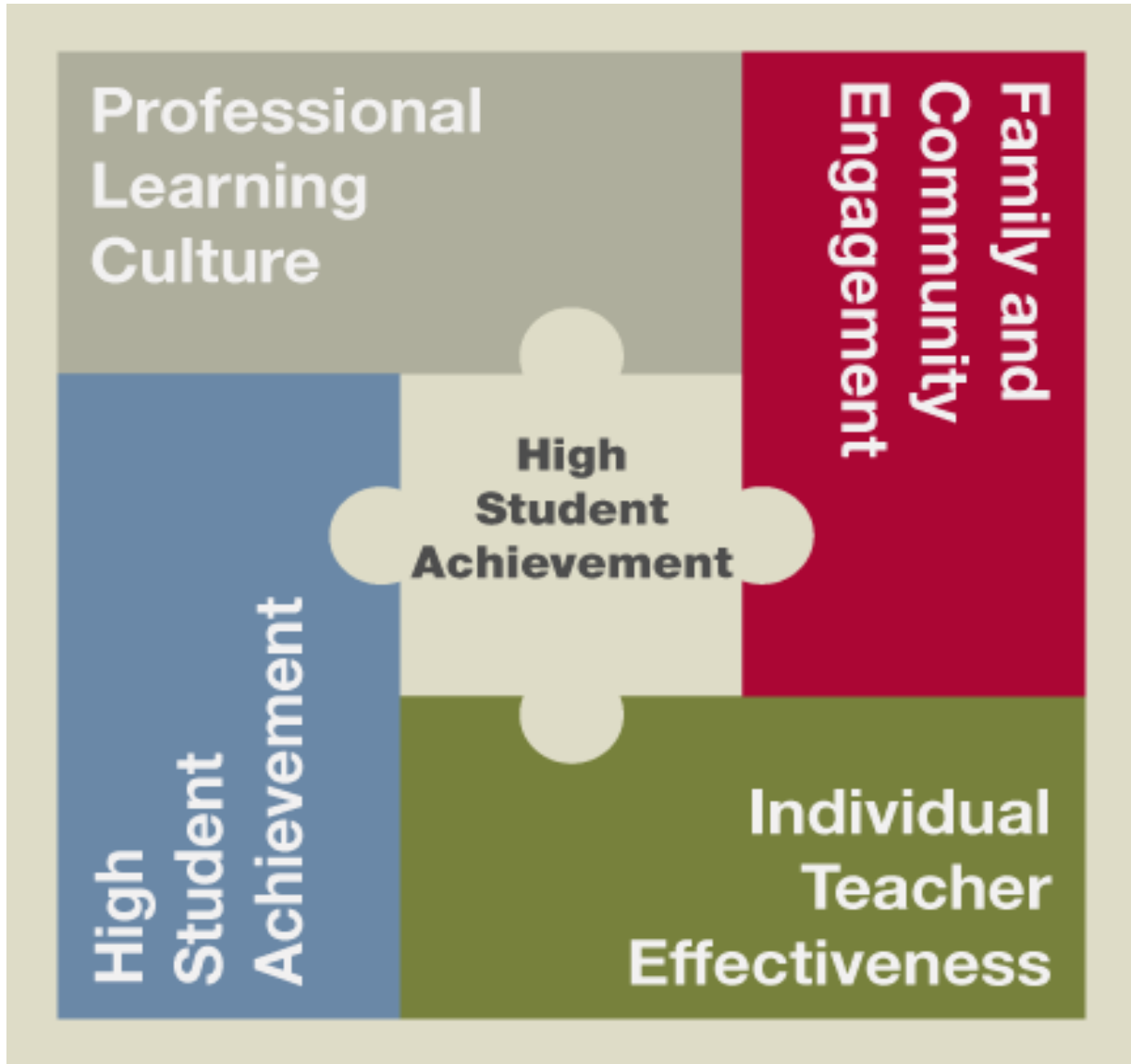
Task 4: Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement

These four tasks are intended to focus on student learning in a **priority academic area** for improvement in the school. \*A **priority academic area** is an area in which improved student performance is desired based on input from staff at the school and district levels and with attention to state or [federally designated](#) student accountability groups or other groups that are a priority in the school. Candidates are required to provide evidence that demonstrates that the chosen subject or academic performance area and identified student group are priorities. As an example, a candidate might designate the accessibility of fourth-grade multiplication skills for English Learners (EL) as a Task 1 priority academic area after carefully analyzing mathematics Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data, as well as fourth-grade, first-term, common assessment data and school and district improvement plans, and consulting with the fourth-grade professional learning community (PLC) teachers.

**The priority academic area must be focused on specific academic subject-area learning with measurable student outcomes.** Disproportionality in a broader range of school data (e.g., attendance data, behavior-related referrals, graduation or retention rates, Advanced Placement® [AP] enrollment) and operational concerns (e.g., budgetary and scheduling constraints) are important and may affect equity in the **priority academic area**. Although such factors should be part of candidates' root cause analysis, they should not be the primary focus when developing a vision for high student achievement

(Task 1), creating a professional learning culture (Task 2), supporting educator effectiveness (Task 3), or promoting family engagement and community involvement (Task 4). As Figure 1 shows, the tasks are expected to overlap and be complementary, centered on a common **priority academic area**. Thus, optimally, a candidate will select one **priority academic area** as the basis for completing all four tasks.

\*The Task 4 priority academic area can be either focused on a priority academic area or on health, emotional, and/or social needs that impact learning.



**Figure 1. Relationship of the Four MA-PAL Tasks**

Each task is designed to require leadership work with the goal of creating of an equity-centered school. Such a school provides an environment where all students, particularly

**members of state or federally designated student accountability groups**<sup>3</sup> or other groups that are a priority locally, can improve their academic performance and reach ambitious learning targets. Although tasks can be completed independently, they are best undertaken as an integrated set of actions to improve student learning in a **priority academic area**. Candidates are required to provide evidence that demonstrates the chosen subject or performance area and identified student group are priorities.

As you select a priority academic area, consider the differences in student performance based on state or federally designated student accountability groups (e.g., students with disabilities; English Learners [EL]; African American, Hispanic, and Native American students; low-income students; and students performing below state proficiency levels) or any additional groups that are a priority in your school.

As shown in Figure 2, we recommend that candidates begin with Task 1 to investigate a **priority academic area and any identified group(s) of students for whom support is needed to dismantle barriers to learning and improve outcomes**. Based on the identification of gaps and opportunities to improve student learning within this group, candidates develop an equitable, inclusive vision of high-quality student learning and plan for action strategies for improving student outcomes in a priority academic area. This priority academic area and plan are ideally, but not necessarily, the basis for engaging a group of educators to explore ways to improve student learning by working together as a professional learning group. The candidate's work to facilitate this learning group is the basis for Task 2. Observing and providing feedback to an individual educator as they work to effectively support student learning is the basis of candidates' activities for Task 3. Finally, for Task 4, candidates form a work group with family and/or community members to plan how to improve family and community engagement in relation to the **priority academic area** or to address related student health, emotional, or social needs that impact student learning. This must be connected to the **priority academic area** but may be broader than the candidates' focal area for professional learning and work.

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<sup>3</sup> State designated student accountability groups include students who have been historically marginalized or underserved by our education systems, including but not limited to those who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Indigenous, or multiracial; students with disabilities; English Learners (EL); LGBTQIA+; students experiencing homelessness and/or financial insecurity; and students who are undocumented. Federally designated groups include students with disabilities; English Learners (EL); African American, Hispanic, and Native American students; economically disadvantaged students; and students performing below state proficiency levels.



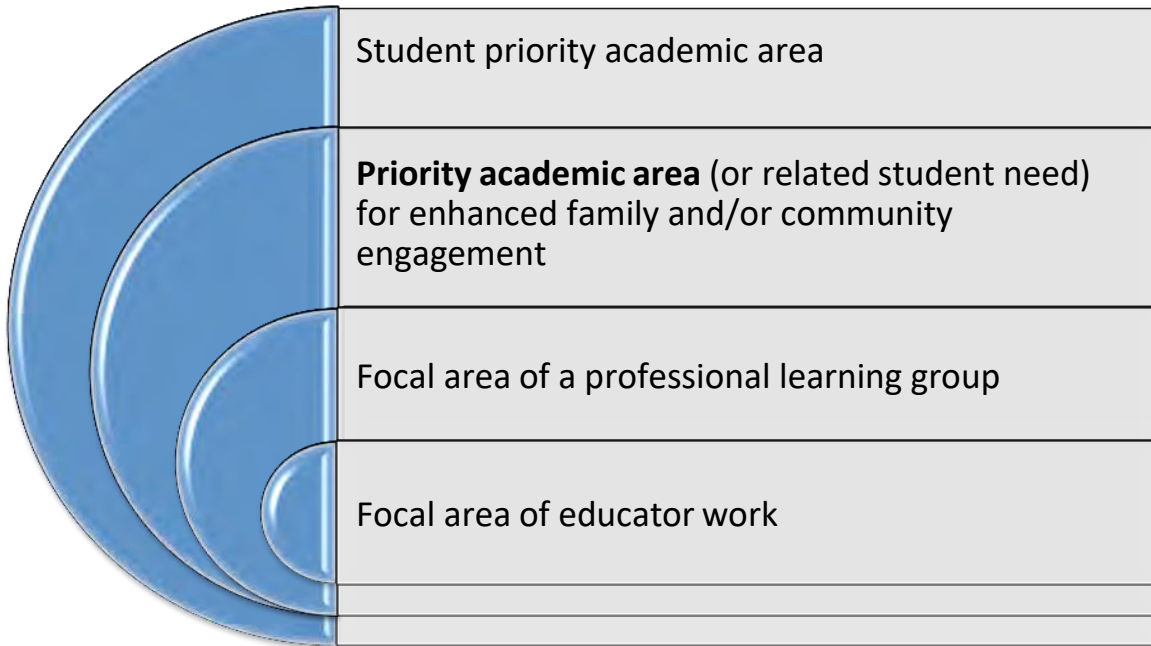


Figure 2. Nested Relationship of Priority Academic Areas

Each task is divided into four components of leadership action that reflect the cycle of leadership inquiry and learning, as shown in Figure 3.

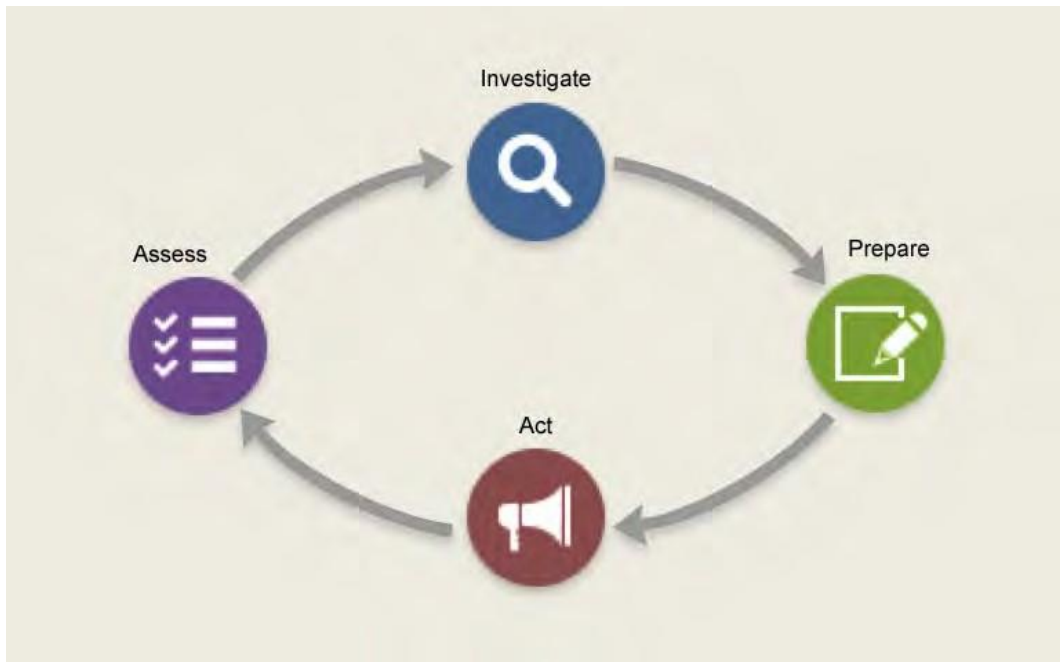


Figure 3. The Components of Leadership Action

## **PAL Work Product Submissions**

For each task, candidates submit artifacts, supporting documents (by category), and a commentary as evidence of planning, implementing, and analyzing leadership practices and engagement of others in improving student learning. Considered part of the assessment for school leader licensure, all the work product submissions will be assessed by trained scorers who have educational leadership expertise.

At least three written artifacts and one commentary are to be submitted for each task. The instructions in each task section provide required word and page lengths. The word count guidelines reflect the fact that school leaders must be adept at preparing focused arguments, plans, and reports; their communications must be concise but well detailed. Scorers are not required to read artifacts and commentary or view video submissions that exceed the requirements. Submissions that fall far short of the required word length (or minute length) are likely to lack sufficient information and detail, which would adversely affect how the scorers evaluate the work products and thus the candidate's potential score.

- Refer to the PAL Evidence Charts in each task section of this handbook for details regarding file formats, expected page lengths, video requirements, and other upload specifications.
- Review the [PAL Submission Requirements and Condition Codes](#) located at the end of this handbook. If your submission does not meet the Submission Requirements, a condition code may be applied during the scoring process instead of a numerical score. If a condition code is applied to any indicator or rubric, the entire task will be unscorable.
- Refer to the [Condition Codes](#) section in this Handbook for a list of condition codes and reasons why they may be applied.

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## **Clarifying the Candidate's Role in the Performance Assessment**

The purpose of these tasks is to enable candidates to demonstrate **their** leadership skills and practices as evidence of their readiness for an initial school leader position. Candidate submissions are reviewed for originality. In preparing their submission, candidates must clearly explain their role and responsibilities. It is **critical to explain your role** in completing the tasks to ensure the authenticity of the work being submitted. In the event of any collaboration with other individual(s), be sure to identify

any and all points of collaboration; include the rationale or purpose of the collaboration; clearly explain roles in the collaboration; and attest that your submissions, including written artifacts and commentary, **are entirely your own original products in your own words and not the products of others.** In the absence of any explanation, scorers will assume that the work was completed by others and the submission will not be scored. Submissions are reviewed for originality.

Please refer to the Rules of Assessment Participation 2.B.1. The Rules are found on the [Pilot page of the program website](#).

## **Collaboration and Required Disclosure**

Candidates can collaborate with others; however, each candidate must submit original work products, including written artifacts and commentary. **That means your submissions must be written by you in your own words; your written submissions should have no overlap with your collaborators unless you are including written school or district policies or schoolwide or districtwide documents.** Each work product should clearly demonstrate individual thought and reflection and should not be identical to another candidate's submission, even when the work was done collaboratively. As required in the [Rules of Assessment Participation 2.B.1](#), be sure to identify any and all points of collaboration with any other individual(s), include the rationale or purpose of the collaboration, and clearly state your role in the collaboration and the role(s) of your collaborators. Provide appropriate attribution(s) so that scorers are able to differentiate your original work from the work of others. Failure to disclose collaboration as required in this section may result in disqualification of your submissions and the imposition of sanctions on your educator license(s).

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## **Confidentiality**

Candidates will have access to their own scores. Candidates will have access to their work products up until the time of submission.

Scorers will be screened and assigned to candidates who are not in their own districts or preparation programs to ensure candidate anonymity and confidentiality.

A sample Confidentiality and Anonymity Form is available on the PAL website. An editable version is provided within the ePortfolio system. Candidates are required to complete and upload this form for each task.

## Performance Standards

The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, based on the recommendations of the PAL Technical Advisory and Standards Setting committees, has established the performance standards for PAL as follows, which will be re-evaluated as part of this development effort:

- 1) All completed work must yield a minimum threshold score of 2.1 (on a 4.0 scale) for each task. A threshold score is a minimum performance expectation for inclusion when determining the total score.
- 2) The performance standard for the four tasks is a candidate's total average score of all four tasks. Candidates must meet or exceed a passing score of 2.75 (on a 4.0 scale). The total PAL score is based on an average of the overall scores for each of four tasks and requires that at least some task-specific scores are higher than the threshold score. Candidates' work that only meets the threshold scores (2.1) for each of the four tasks will not obtain a passing score of 2.75 or above for the PAL assessment.

Task	Threshold Score per Task	Total Passing Score
Task 1	2.1	
Task 2	2.1	
Task 3	2.1	
Task 4	2.1	
Total		2.75

Candidates who participate in the PAL pilot will receive a score of at least 2.75 for a complete, scorable submission. Pilot test results may be used to satisfy the licensure assessment requirement. A scorable submission is one that is complete and can be reviewed by a scorer and have scores assigned to all rubrics.

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## Evaluation Criteria

Measurement of the anti-racist leadership competencies are interwoven throughout the scoring rubrics. The evidence submitted will be judged according to five primary components of leadership practice for each candidate:

- 1) Setting direction for high student achievement
- 2) Creating a professional learning culture among staff
- 3) Supporting individual educator development
- 4) Engaging families and community in improving student learning
- 5) Analyzing leadership practices

Candidates provide evidence for the first four components of leadership practice when they complete the corresponding tasks and through the artifacts they produce and other relevant documents. Candidates provide evidence for analyzing leadership practices, the last component, in their commentaries.

Candidates' submitted work products are maintained confidentially and scored online by trained scorers using the rubrics that are presented at the end of each task section in this Handbook. Candidates' scores are submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for principal licensure decisions.

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## **Rubrics**

The rubrics will be used to score candidates' work. In preparing materials for submission, candidates are strongly encouraged to review the rubric expectations. Before submitting, candidates are strongly encouraged to evaluate their work using the rubrics.

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## **Administrative Review**

As stated in both the [Performance Assessment for Leaders Pilot Test Rules of Assessment Participation as well as in Score Reporting Policies](#), it is imperative that candidates submit original work that does not mirror previously submitted work by other candidates. Submissions are identified for Administrative Review if screening indicates a match of identical or similar language with other sources. Failure to submit original work will result in, at a minimum, voiding of your submission but may also include a waiting period before being able to submit additional tasks, or a letter of reprimand in your ELAR file and other potential licensure consequences.

Candidates are able to collaborate with peers on completing any or all tasks. Please see the Collaboration and Required Disclosure section above to review how to frame your work when submitting for scoring.

# Task 1

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## Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement

### What Do School Leaders Need to Think about When Realizing a Vision for Equitable Achievement for All Students?

School leaders have the responsibility to create and cultivate a school environment where all students, particularly members of state or federally designated student accountability groups, can attain academic knowledge and skills, understand themselves and others, develop a sense of belonging, and engage with the world. Central to the realization of a universally shared vision of high-quality student learning and success is the establishment of meaningful goals and expectations; respectful and trusting relationships among and between educators and students; and effective programs and practices based on both evidence and research and on the commitment of educators, families, and the community. Leaders must act to ensure that this vision is reflected in both the school's instructional program (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) and its culture.

**For the purposes of PAL, school culture is defined as having three dimensions: (1) the professional learning culture (educator–educator relationships), (2) the student culture (educator–student and student–student relationships), and (3) the culture of family and community engagement (school staff, family, and community relationships). For a positive school culture that promotes learning, all three dimensions must be actively promoted and maintained, and all three are addressed in this task.**

Task 1 assesses the capacity of school leadership candidates to develop an equitable and inclusive vision of high-quality student learning and a plan for improving student outcomes in a **priority academic area**: a curricular subject or student performance area in which changes in practice, resources, or curricula are needed to address barriers that limit students' access to learning. A candidate can develop a vision and plan only after conducting a thorough analysis of a variety of data, including student academic performance data and input from school community members.

**The priority academic area must be focused on specific academic subject-area learning with measurable student outcomes.** Disproportionality in a broader range of school data (e.g., attendance data, behavior-related referrals, retention rates, AP® enrollment) and operational concerns (e.g., budgetary and scheduling constraints) is important and

may affect equity in the **priority academic area**. Although such factors should be part of the candidate's root cause analysis, they should not be the primary focus when developing a vision and plan.

Candidates must provide evidence to demonstrate why the chosen **priority academic area** is a priority. A candidate can identify the same or a similar **priority academic area** for Tasks 1, 2, 3, and/or 4, but for Task 4 you have the option to focus on student health, emotional, and/or social needs that impact student learning.

Candidates must also use evidence to identify one or more student groups who experience barriers to learning in the **priority academic area**. A student *group* can describe all students in a grade or content area or can be based on demographic attributes, designation as a state or federal student accountability group, or shared educational characteristics. For the purposes of this task, the group(s) identified by the candidate is called the **student focal group(s)**. The goal of the candidate's vision and plan is to dismantle barriers facing the **student focal group(s)**.

### **Task 1 Example**

**A candidate analyzes mathematics MCAS data and fourth-grade common assessments and determines that the percentage of students who are English Learners (EL) demonstrating proficiency in the multiplication of whole numbers is lower than the aggregate percentage for grade four. After reviewing school and district improvement plans and consulting with various school community members, the candidate identifies the following as their priority academic area: *ensuring that instruction in fourth-grade multiplication skills is accessible for all students*. The student focal group would be *fourth-grade students who are English Learners (EL)*.**

**The candidate also identifies a lack of common planning time for fourth-grade teachers and English as a Second Language teachers as a barrier to learning for the student focal group. Although this concern requires further exploration and will likely be part of the candidate's plan, it is not to be identified as the priority academic area.**

To begin this task, you must collect and analyze relevant school-level student performance data as well as school context and culture data to identify (1) a **priority academic area** where barriers to equitable student learning exist and (2) a **student focal group or groups** whose academic success is impacted by those barriers. Then you will solicit additional information from students, educators, staff, families, and school community members to acquire explicit knowledge about the **priority academic area** and the student focal group(s). Consider the following:

- The school’s context and culture
- Existing schoolwide practices and programs for supporting all students and evidence of fidelity in their implementation and effectiveness
- The ways in which the school experiences of students may differ, in particular for state or federally designated student accountability group(s)

You should also review the Massachusetts [Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders: Professional Standards and Indicators for Administrative Leadership](#).

In addition, you will be asked to **gather and evaluate input and feedback from school community members at two separate and distinct times during Task 1**. First, input should be gathered to help identify and justify the selected **priority academic area** and student focal group(s). This aspect of the data-gathering process should be completed prior to the development of the plan vision, strategies, or implementation details. Then after you have developed a plan, you will be asked to solicit feedback from school leaders and school community members regarding the plan’s relevance, quality, and feasibility, as well as any suggestions for plan revisions.

## **What Do You Need to Do to Complete This Task?**

- Collect, disaggregate, and analyze three to five years of quantitative student performance data (e.g., MCAS data, end-of-course assessments, standards-based assessments). Focus your analysis on identifying a priority academic area with disparate outcomes for different groups of students.
- Based on your analysis, identify the **priority academic area** where barriers to student learning exist and define the **student focal group(s)** for the task.
- Collect additional data related to assessment, curriculum, instruction, and school culture (e.g., school improvement plan, school programs and services, educators’ years of experience/teaching assignments) to further define barriers impeding the learning and growth of all students in the **priority academic area**. Consider how these data may be indicative of biases in assessment methods and instruments, curricular resources, and instructional practices.
- Document existing school programs, services, and practices relevant to the student focal group’s performance in the **priority academic area**; assess their effectiveness; identify gaps in equitable access to these programs, services, and practices; and describe opportunities for their improvement.
- Collect and analyze qualitative data (e.g., surveys, focus groups, school observations) to better understand the root causes affecting outcomes in the **priority academic**



**area** for the student focal group(s). Include input from a variety of school community members (e.g., students, parents/guardians, educators, school/district leaders) to ensure that the data collection reflects multiple perspectives.

- Synthesize your analysis of the collected quantitative and qualitative data and develop a plan with specific goals and actions honoring students' strengths and addressing barriers to student learning, including historically systemic racial inequities. Include a **vision statement** (how the plan will improve educator effectiveness and support improved outcomes in the priority academic area for the student focal group), an evidence-based justification (how the plan reflects a close analysis of the collected data), and a theory of action (how the plan clarifies and addresses root causes of inequity present in the school context and culture).
- Intentionally seek out viewpoints from all communities represented in the school about how your plan furthers learning in the **priority academic area** for the student focal group(s) and engage participants in meaningful contributions.
- Synthesize the feedback received from all stakeholders and make revisions to your plan that address barriers to student learning and achievement in the identified priority academic area.
- Write a commentary that: (1) summarizes and constructively critiques the leadership skills and practices you used or developed in completing this task and (2) reflects on how systemic biases, structural inequities, and opportunity gaps affect your school/district, as well as the role of school leaders in confronting these barriers to support and sustain high-quality instruction and improved outcomes for all students.

## **What Questions Do You Need to Consider to Complete This Task?**

- What school and district data related to student performance, school context, and school culture are essential for identifying the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s)?
- What additional school/district data are needed to deepen your understanding of the school experience of the student focal group(s) in the **priority academic area**?
- How will you engage school community members in collaborative decision-making as you complete this task? What steps will you take to intentionally seek out viewpoints from all communities represented in the school, particularly historically marginalized communities, regarding the barriers to student learning and achievement? How can you collect this information in a timely, inclusive, and equitable manner?
- What sources of evidence make an argument compelling when advocating for changes that confront the root causes of barriers to learning for the student focal group at the school?

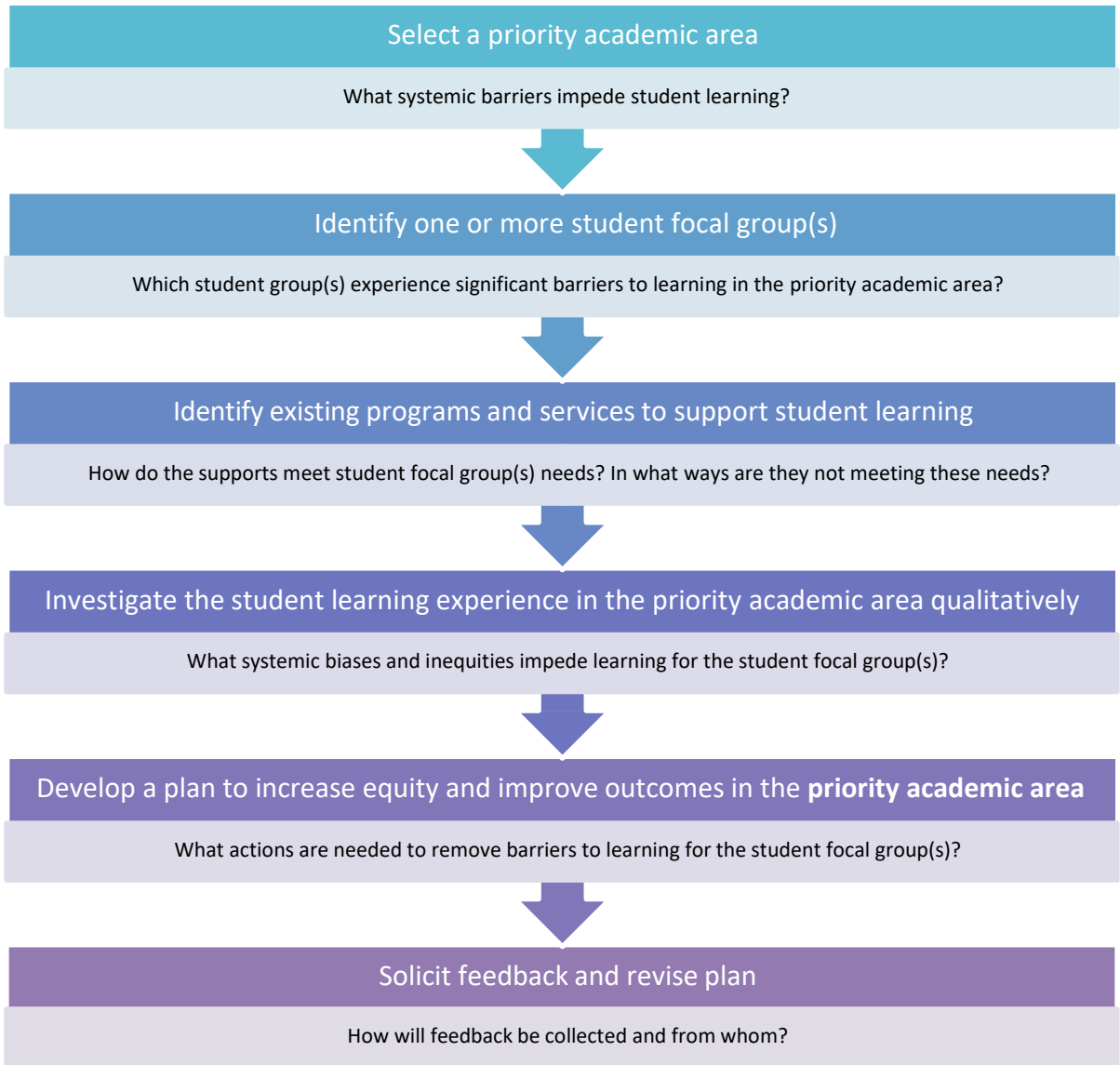
- Are the actions and goals in the plan to increase equitable access to learning and improve outcomes for the student focal group in the **priority academic area** specific, measurable, rigorous, and realistic?
- Did you seek and receive feedback from all groups represented in the school community regarding the plan? Was the feedback constructive, or did it represent resistance to change? Do the revisions to the plan appropriately reflect this feedback?
- What did you learn about your leadership skills, the school, and the role of school leaders in advocating for change as a result of completing this task?

Each school has a unique set of attributes that defines its context, including grade span, size, staffing composition, resources, attrition rates, and the demographic characteristics of students and staff. Consider the elements of the school context that are relevant to the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s) you select and the plan you develop.

As you conduct work for Task 1, **intentional equity pauses** will be provided at several junctures to encourage your reflection. (See “[What Is an Intentional Equity Pause?](#)” in the Introduction.)

Your investigation should progress through the inquiry and planning process illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Task 1 Inquiry and Planning Process



## The Components of the Task

### Component 1: Investigate

Task 1 begins with an investigation of **student outcome data** to identify priority academic areas where differences in outcomes between student groups are apparent. Next, **collect and analyze additional data and information** to deepen your understanding of teaching and learning and identify one **priority academic area** and one or more student focal groups as priorities. You can identify the same or a similar **priority academic area** for Tasks 1, 2, 3, and/or 4, but for Task 4 you have the option to focus on student health, emotional, and/or social needs that impact student learning.

As part of your investigation, pay particular attention to aspects of the educational program where barriers to equitable student learning may exist and where the school’s approach to supporting students—through programs, services, and policies—is not meeting the needs of one or more student groups. For example, an independent research requirement may represent a barrier if students in one or more groups do not have access to high-speed internet outside of school. Academic support services provided in a school building outside of the school day are unlikely to meet the needs of all student groups if the families are not consulted regarding scheduling and information is not provided in all languages spoken in the school community.

Focus on the educational needs in the school and on the barriers to academic success that groups of students may experience. Give particular attention to students who are part of state or federally designated student accountability groups, as well as to school data and local priorities. Consider using the inquiry tools and data use strategies outlined in the [Massachusetts District Data Team Toolkit](#). They provide suggestions on using various types of data, engaging with others in data inquiry and planning, and using data for vision building and planning.

Before you begin your data collection and analysis, engage in critical reflection guided by the following question:

**What are my preconceptions about how different groups of students learn in specific academic content areas?**

Take time to reflect on how you view teaching and learning at the school, as well as your own identities, including but not limited to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Also, consider intersectionality, the intersections of your personal identities. Do you perceive some academic content areas

as inherently more rigorous than others or more accessible? Do you perceive instruction in some content areas as free from structural inequity and in other areas as inherently biased? Do you perceive students in some groups as being necessarily advantaged or as automatically disadvantaged?

Once preconceptions and implicit biases are identified and considered critically, they are less likely to shape the interpretation of theoretically neutral data. However, **proactively ensuring** that you collect and review multiple sources of data reflecting the full diversity of the school community—for example, racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic, socioeconomic—remains essential.

Begin by **reviewing three to five years of available or newly collected student outcome data**. Although it is preferable to review more recent data, these data must be no older than eight years. Data may include, but are not limited to:

- the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) or other standardized measures
- Early Literacy Universal Screening Assessments approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (e.g., DIBELS 8th Edition, EarlyBird, mCLASS)
- grade promotion rates
- end-of-course assessments
- course completion rates
- dropout rates
- standards-aligned assessments
- PSAT, SAT, ACT, and/or AP<sup>®</sup> scores
- graduation and college-going rates

In the review process, identify trends and patterns related to student academic success. Disaggregate the data to investigate patterns of differences between student groups in these trends, with special attention to the state or federally designated student accountability groups as well as school demographic data and school or district priorities. In which priority academic areas are differences in student performance apparent? Which students experience the impact of these differences?

[Access Massachusetts school district data-collection and analysis tools](#) to assist in examining available qualitative and quantitative information.

As part of the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation, [the Commonwealth requires the use of student and staff feedback surveys](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html?section=07), which may provide information that is relevant to this task (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html?section=07>).

Continue to **collect and analyze additional data related to teaching, assessment, and student learning and achievement** in the priority academic area or areas where potential equity gaps exist. Consider the following questions and the types of data suggested to guide you through this process.

- 1) *What formal or informal assessment results have been disaggregated and analyzed as part of this task? What does the analysis of these data reveal about existing barriers and gaps at your school regarding teaching and learning? How is student achievement adversely affected by the presence of barriers and gaps in the priority academic area(s)?*

Dive more deeply into the performance data you have already reviewed. The **priority academic area** should be the area in which differences in student outcomes represent the greatest equity challenge. Prioritize the students who appear to experience the most significant barriers in the **priority academic area**—the **student focal group(s)**.

- 2) *What is the relationship between outcomes in the **priority academic area** for the student focal group(s) and additional student, educator, and school data?*

To investigate this question, review available student engagement data (e.g., attendance and program participation rates) and educator quality and engagement data (e.g., years of teaching, qualifications, length of time at the school). How does this information help explain student outcomes for the **priority academic area**, particularly for the student focal group(s)? How does their relationship refine your understanding of the barriers experienced by the student focal group(s)?

- 3) *How do the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s) align with school and district priorities?*

Review the district and school’s vision and mission statements and existing improvement plans. As you refine your understanding of the **priority academic area**, consider how it relates to the school and district priorities for school improvement.

### Intentional Equity Pause

Pause and use the questions below to guide reflection, identify barriers, and name how you can address systemic biases and promote racial equity.

*What perceptions, assumptions, and biases exist about the student focal group(s) and their learning among the school's educators, all members of the school community, and members of the larger community's dominant demographic group?*

*Do any goals in the current school improvement plan address the learning of the student focal group(s)? Are there programs and supports in place to further their learning? What have been the results of these programs and supports?*

*Will identifying this group of students as the focus of your efforts result in consequences, intended or unintended, for the students? Will the impact on the student focal group(s) at this stage be positive or negative?*

At the end of this phase, you should have identified a clearly defined, well-justified focus for an improvement plan: the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s).

## Component 2: Prepare

Begin preparing a plan for confronting barriers to learning for the student focal group(s) in the **priority academic area** by gathering additional data, **analyzing root causes**, and **evaluating opportunities for improvement**. Review and analyze information regarding existing school programs, processes, and practices; seek input from school community members; and investigate possible improvement strategies.

Consider using strategies and resources from [Planning for Success in Massachusetts](#), Massachusetts Office of Planning and Research's recommended strategic planning and continuous improvement process, which include tools for school or district self-assessment of strengths and areas for improvement; steps to explore root causes of inequities and barriers to student learning; and means of establishing goals, objectives, and strategic plans. The Equity Focus Lens tools in the [Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook](#) will help you interrogate and reflect on the data you collect.

Below are the recommended preparation steps that you should take:

- 1) Collect and analyze additional data related to the learning experience for the student focal group(s) through school culture and climate surveys, observations in and around the school, classroom visits, and informal interviews, as well as focus group

discussions and additional surveys of students, educators, and school community members.

- 2) Audit school programs, processes, and practices that relate to the **priority academic area** (e.g., scheduling, teaching practices, academic intervention, team time, family participation, professional development opportunities) to identify structural inequities and systemic biases, as well as opportunities for improvement.
- 3) Solicit further input to determine the strengths, interests, and needs of all students—in particular the student focal group(s)—relative to outcomes in the **priority academic area** using surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations from school leaders, educators, students, family members, and community members.

### **Intentional Equity Pause**

**Pause and use the questions below to guide reflection, identify barriers, and name how you can address systemic biases and promote racial equity.**

***Are my data-collection strategies inclusive of all groups in the school community, including those whose experiences, beliefs, primary languages, and/or cultural norms may differ from my own?***

***What voices in the school community are represented/empowered in my data collection and analysis? What voices, including voices of currently and historically underserved populations within the school community, are underrepresented, absent, or silenced?***

***How do the data I have collected further my understanding of the root causes of the barriers to learning for the student focal group(s)?***

- 4) Identify components of the school program that represent barriers to learning for the student focal group(s). Limited adoption or the absence of culturally responsive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, identity-affirming, and anti-racist school practices may represent barriers to learning. In addition, identify those components that are working well and meeting the needs of all students. Consider all of the following:
  - a. **Curriculum** (see the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#) or the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan).
  - b. **Instruction** (see indicators of proficient and exemplary teaching in the



[Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation: Teacher Rubric](#)).

- c. **Assessment** (formative and/or summative).
- d. **School culture** (e.g., student engagement, attendance, grade completion, course taking, and extracurricular activities; discipline practices; use of time, such as scheduling, grouping, and tiered instruction; additional school culture and student engagement improvement efforts; and family engagement; see additional indicators in [Ensuring A Positive School Culture and Climate Conducive to Learning: School Visit Protocol Supporting Standard II](#)).

Across Massachusetts, student populations are becoming increasingly diverse. Professional practices related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture in each district and school must meet the varied needs of every student and empower all students by affirming their racial, linguistic, and cultural identities.

As you consider practices at your school, explore the link below to learn more about definitions, examples, and resources related to *cultural responsiveness* and *culturally and linguistically sustaining practices*.

[Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices—Center for Instructional Support \(www.doe.mass.edu\)](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

- 5) Explore possible improvement actions and goals through evidence-based best practices sources and input from school community members that may be relevant for the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s), including but not limited to culturally responsive and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.

Consider the nature of the school improvement planning process that currently exists in the school and what formal reporting is required. Determine how the possible improvement actions and goals might build on, contribute to, or be part of this planning.

Consider district, school, and community conditions—including systemic equity issues and ongoing efforts to address them—that contribute to the school’s existing school improvement or strategic plan.

### Component 3: Act

Using the results from Component 2, **design and present a plan** including an integrated set of actions to confront barriers to learning and improve outcomes in the **priority**

**academic area** for the student focal group(s). The plan should be built around a set of goals and measurable student objectives and a coherent **theory of action** that explains how implementing the plan will lead to increased access to learning and improved academic outcomes for the student focal group(s). It should reflect the school context and culture, as well as the scope and nature of the intended changes.

**A theory of action is an explanatory map of how specific strategies (practices, programs, and/or policies) will improve specific outcomes (in this case, student learning) and why.**

The plan should include the core elements described in the [Massachusetts focused planning guide](#), which provides tools and resources for a planning process and examples of district plans.

Furthermore, it should include avenues to improve student outcomes by reducing barriers and increasing access to learning in one or more of the following:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- School culture

As you develop your plan, **solicit input and guidance** from the leadership team and key members of the school community—including students, educators, family members, and community representatives. Document their ideas and recommendations, as well as the information they provide. This input should be formative to the planning process, addressing the scope and nature of the **priority academic area**, the needs of the student focal group(s), the strengths and limitations of existing programs and practices, and the potential for new evidence-based practices to confront systemic bias, increase equitable access to learning, and improve student outcomes.

The plan itself should be written as a compelling, evidence-based argument about how the proposed actions will increase access to learning and improve outcomes for the student focal group(s) in the priority academic area. In order to garner support from the school community, including the leadership team, the plan should include sufficient details about the following:

- A list of goals and measurable objectives related to student outcomes, including the scope and nature of the changes intended
- A set of actions to increase access to learning and improve student outcomes in the

priority academic area that change, build on, or add to already existing programs and strategies

- A theory of action about how these actions will identify and interrogate structural inequities and systemic biases and will lead to greater increased access to learning and improved student outcomes, as well as fostering student engagement
- Identification of existing resources and new resources that the plan requires
- Changes in school organization or structure (e.g., common planning time, block scheduling, after-school and tutorial programs) for the proposed actions
- Roles and lines of responsibility for implementing each goal and action
- Steps to engage staff and garner support for each goal and action
- A timeline for the development and implementation of the plan
- Proposed evaluation and feedback approaches to determine whether the actions included in the plan yield the intended outcomes

The school principal or superintendent and the school leadership team should critically review the draft plan and provide feedback to you. Unlike the input previously obtained, this feedback is more summative and should address the plan’s relevance, quality, comprehensiveness, and feasibility. Evaluate this feedback and use it to guide your revisions to improve the plan.

**Each school has one or more leaders (principal, assistant principal, and educator leaders) and may also have a leadership team that represents the primary members of the school community. Any plan developed for improvement in the school requires their input and support or approval. These leaders in turn can provide critical feedback to strengthen a proposal for increasing equity and improving student outcomes.**

In addition, seek out input from all members of the school community, including students, parents/guardians, and/or community representatives who can bring an understanding of the school experience of students in the focal group(s) to their reviews. Evaluate this feedback and use it to guide your revisions to improve the plan.

The final version of your plan should be revised based on all the feedback you receive, with an explanation of how the feedback was used.

### Intentional Equity Pause

Pause and use the questions below to guide reflection, identify barriers, and name how you can address systemic biases and promote racial equity.

*Would your plan challenge or reinforce existing assumptions and biases about the student focal group(s) and their learning? Could students in the group(s) be harmed in any way by your plan?*

*If fully implemented, would your plan necessitate changes to staff members' daily schedules or responsibilities? How would you communicate these changes to staff? How might these changes be received by staff members?*

*What consequences, intended and unintended, might result for the student focal group(s) from your plan's implementation?*

### Component 4: Assess

As a final step, evaluate the leadership skills and practices you used in this task. Describe the nature of your support from school and district leadership in undertaking this task and how the support contributed to the process and the successful completion of the task. Your analysis should include specific examples of those leadership skills and practices and specific examples of what worked well and what could be improved to develop further as an instructional leader.

The leadership evaluation is not a recap of the steps you took to complete this task. It should specifically **address your leadership skills and practices** related to the following aspects of this task:

- Your collection and analysis of data to determine the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s), including your evaluation of the school program and identification of barriers to student learning.
- Your engagement of others in the planning process, including soliciting input during planning.
- Your development of a proposed vision, theory of action, and set of actions, including culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, to increase access to learning and improve student outcomes.
- Your planning and construction of a compelling argument to gain support for the proposed actions.
- Your presentation of the plan and solicitation of feedback from school leaders and

members of the school community.

- Your use of the feedback to make revisions and improve the plan.

### **Intentional Equity Pause**

**Pause and use the following questions to guide reflection, identify barriers, and name how you can address systemic biases and promote racial equity.**

***Did your data collection and analysis lead you to new insights about potential barriers to equitable learning in the school culture and the educational program? How did these insights inform your plan? How will they inform your leadership skills and practices in your current role and in the future?***

***What approaches did you take to communicating with school community members whose experiences, beliefs, and/or primary languages differ from your own? Did you reflect on your own preferred style of communication and adjust to ensure that you were also working to address the preferred communication styles of others? Is input and feedback from all school community groups adequately represented in your plan?***

***Did your work result in dismantling biases and improving equity at the school? If so, how? Did any negative consequences emerge as you completed this task? What leadership strategies did you use when you confronted negative consequences resulting from your work?***

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## Artifacts, Documents, and Commentary

This section provides instructions about the materials the school leadership candidate needs to submit for the review process:

- Confidentiality and Anonymity Form. An editable version is available within the ePortfolio system. You are required to complete and upload this form for each task.
- Three artifacts.
- Documents that support your artifacts.
- Your commentary in narrative form, in response to a series of prompts, about the development of your leadership skills while completing this task.

**Remember: Your artifacts must not include personally identifying information about you, the school staff, or the students. Your submissions must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Be sure to protect the anonymity of the participants in your study by using generic labels (e.g., Principal A, School B, Teacher C)—not aliases, pseudonyms, or first names—for the district, school, students, and staff, and all individuals.**

### Artifacts

The artifacts that you submit for scoring, each in a separate file, are described below.

The artifacts submitted must represent authentic work completed by candidates and members of the working groups formed for three of the tasks. Listed below are descriptions of the artifacts required for Task 1.

#### Artifact 1: Priority Academic Area and Its Context

In a **memo** of up to three single-spaced pages (up to 1,500 words) to be written by you to the principal or superintendent, provide the following information:

- A description of a **priority academic area** where barriers to student learning exist, with attention to one or more state or federally designated student accountability groups as well as school data and school and district priorities.
- A compelling rationale, based on the data you collected and analyzed, for selecting the **priority academic area** and the student focal group(s). The rationale for selecting the priority academic area and student focal group(s) should be grounded in your reflections on systemic bias and issues of representation, should be aligned with

school and/or district priorities and goals, and should draw on quantitative and qualitative data you present in this artifact. You should discuss your specific role in the collection and analysis of selected data, as well as the contributions of any individuals involved in this process. Draw clear connections between the data analyzed and the selection of the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s).

- An analysis of multiple sources of relevant quantitative and qualitative data (with appropriate references for each source) on student performance; student, educator, and school culture; and student engagement that includes:
  - An analysis of three to five years of quantitative academic performance data that are no older than eight years.
  - An analysis of relevant student engagement data (e.g., attendance and program participation rates) and educator quality and engagement data (e.g., years of teaching, years in the school, annual turnover, attendance, licensure, qualification, degrees earned).
  - An analysis of student and school culture drawing on various measures (e.g., student, educator, and stakeholder culture and climate surveys; focus groups; interviews).
  - An analysis of additional, relevant quantitative and qualitative data that clarifies possible reasons that barriers to learning exist within the **priority academic area** for the student focal group(s).
- Descriptions of the school and community contexts that influence student performance and engagement, with a particular focus on systemic biases that affect student groups and must be considered in developing your plan.
- A summary of structural inequities, gaps, utilization problems, and human and other resource limitations of existing school programs, services, and practices in relation to the priority academic area, drawing on the quantitative and qualitative data you present in this artifact as well as your analysis and reflections.
- How input was solicited throughout the planning process:
  - Identification (by role) of which individuals from the leadership team, staff, and members of the school community provided input during the planning process.
  - A description of how these individuals provided input and the nature of their input in terms of identifying the priority academic area and student focal group(s), assessing equity gaps and opportunities for improvement, and recommending improvement strategies.
  - A description of your role in soliciting, analyzing, and utilizing input reflecting

multiple perspectives from members of the school community.

**Note: Synthesize the data used to define your priority academic area and the student focal group(s). Do not present tables of information without interpreting the data and drawing conclusions about your selection of the priority academic area and student focal group(s). Use tables of data judiciously to guide and inform readers. Tables may be displayed in the Category 1 or Category 4 documents (as defined below) and referenced in this artifact. It is acceptable to link to school and district information, but the artifact is expected to be your own work, not work already done by the school.**

## **Artifact 2: The Plan for Action Strategies**

In a **memo** of up to four single-spaced pages (up to 2,000 words) to be written by you to the superintendent or principal, present a plan (the components of which are detailed below) that outlines a set of goals, objectives, and actions to increase equitable access to learning and improve outcomes in the **priority academic area** for the student focal group(s). Provide the following explanations and rationales for the plan:

- A vision statement describing how the plan confronts barriers to student learning and will support and sustain improved outcomes in the **priority academic area** for the student focal group(s).
- A compelling, evidence-based justification explaining how the plan responds to the school context and student culture, considers structural inequities and systemic biases, and addresses the needs of the student focal group(s) to improve outcomes.
- A theory of action describing how the plan's components collectively will address the root causes of barriers to student learning; lead to improved outcomes for all students, including the student focal group(s); and foster student engagement.

In addition, include the following components of the plan:

- Goals and measurable objectives specifying the improvements in student outcomes that will define success for the plan.
- A set of actions to increase access to learning and improve student outcomes in the priority academic area, including the implementation of culturally responsive and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, with details about how each action will be taken.
- Existing resources used and new resources required.
- Changes in the school organization or structure (common planning time, block scheduling, after-school programs, etc.) needed to support the proposed actions.



- Roles and lines of responsibility for the proposed actions and the implementation of new practices.
- Steps to engage staff and garner support for the proposed actions.
- A timeline specifying when the components of the plan will be implemented, as well as proposed evaluation and feedback processes that will be used to determine whether these strategies yield the intended outcomes.
- Clear identification of your specific contributions to the development of this plan and the contributions of individuals, group members, and/or relevant members of the school community.

### **Artifact 3: Findings, Feedback, and Recommendations**

In a **report** of up to three single-spaced pages (up to 1,500 words), describe how you **collected feedback** from school leaders, the leadership team, and school community members about the proposed plan, and how you **synthesized and interpreted the feedback**. It is critical to include feedback collected in the planning phase and after the plan was developed and to describe the feedback beyond a surface level. The report should include the following information:

- Identification (by role) of which individuals from the leadership team, staff, and constituencies in the school community provided feedback on the proposed plan.
- Synthesis and interpretation of their feedback that includes the following information:
  - How comprehensive the plan is in its focus, theory of action, and proposed actions for addressing barriers to student learning and improving outcomes for the student focal group(s) in the **priority academic area**.
  - How relevant the proposed actions are for the following:
    - The school’s priorities.
    - The **priority academic area**.
    - The identified needs of the student focal group(s).
    - The school culture, climate, and context, including structural inequities and systemic biases.
    - Alignment to existing school and district plans.
  - The quality and comprehensiveness of the proposed actions.
  - The feasibility of implementing the proposed plan.

- The potential impacts—positive and negative—of implementing the plan on the school, including for the student focal group(s).
- Suggested revisions based on the feedback.
- An **explanation of how the final plan was revised** to incorporate the feedback.

**Note: All supporting documents, reports, and tables of data that are referenced in these artifacts must be included in the appropriate category of documents below and be appropriately cited.**

## **Documents by Category**

Documents that must be submitted are supporting materials used by you and the working groups to complete the task. These documents provide supporting evidence pertaining to the task work and are necessary to inform scoring.

In addition to the artifact files described above, you must submit the following documents used in the task using a separate file for each of these five file categories:

- Category 1: Student demographic and other relevant school context and student performance information.
- Category 2: The school’s existing vision, mission, and school improvement plan.
- Category 3: School and district priorities.
- Category 4: Data-collection forms (e.g., surveys, interview guides) used to gather additional information.
- Category 5: Forms (surveys or interview questions) used to collect feedback from the leadership team and school community members about relevance, quality, comprehensiveness, and feasibility of the proposed plan and a summary of the feedback data collected.

## **Commentary**

You must submit a clearly presented and well-focused written commentary that explains how you accomplished the task. Your commentary should be grounded in the self-reflective work focused on addressing systemic biases and promoting racial equity that you completed throughout the task. This includes the critical reflection step in “Component 1: Investigate” and the intentional equity pauses throughout the task.

Write a personal commentary of up to two single-spaced pages (up to 1,000 words) on your own learning and leadership development throughout this experience. Avoid

simply recapping the steps you took to complete the task. Focus on analysis of your leadership for developing a vision of high-quality learning for all students and a plan for increasing equitable access to learning and improving student outcomes in a **priority academic area**. Base your analysis on the leadership skills you used in developing the plan and in soliciting and using feedback to revise it.

It is critical to include your own learning about your leadership skills and practices. Identify what worked well, what could be improved in your leadership skills and practices, and what adjustments you made to your leadership practices as you worked to complete this task. In addition, it is critical to include your reflections on the structural inequities and systemic biases you identified in the school, the district, and the system of education and the long-term changes that can confront those structural issues.

The commentary should not be a description of your actions or a reiteration of the work accomplished, which is covered in other artifacts and documents. Rather, identify and describe the leadership skills you used during the course of the Task 1 project and your reflections on inequities and biases. Where applicable, provide examples of these leadership skills in action. Be sure to explain how your understanding of the school context and your leadership skills developed or changed as a result of your reflections during the course of the Task 1 project.

Specifically address your leadership skills and practices in response to the following questions about aspects of this task.

- What did you learn about the structural inequities and systemic biases that prevent students from accessing high-quality curriculum and instruction, educational opportunities, and outcomes? What programs, processes, and/or practices at your school represent barriers to equitable learning for all students? What insight did you gain into your own identities and preconceptions? How did your learning affect your leadership skills and practice?
- What leadership skills did you use to determine what data to collect and analyze to identify the **priority academic area** and student focal group(s)? What particular lessons did you learn that shaped your understanding of the school context and your leadership approach?
- What leadership skills did you use to engage members of the school community in the process of identifying the priority academic area and focal group, developing a theory of action, determining goals and actions, and creating the plan? Describe any adjustments you made to your leadership practices throughout the task. How did your leadership skills change over time?

- What leadership skills did you use to construct a compelling argument to gain support for the proposed plan and solicit feedback to improve the plan? What problems did you encounter, and what successes did you achieve?
- What leadership skills did you use to gain input and guidance throughout the process and feedback on the draft plan? Whose perspectives were included, and whose were not? What would you do differently to increase engagement in the process? Include specific examples of what worked well and how you would improve your leadership skills for the future in developing a vision of high-quality student learning and a plan for improving student outcomes.
- What feedback did you receive from school leaders, students, educators, parents/guardians, community members, and members of the school community regarding your leadership during Task 1, and how can you use this feedback to improve your leadership practices moving forward?

## Task 1 PAL Evidence Chart

This chart provides a list of all required work products for **PAL Task 1**, as well as a description of supported file types for submission. Your PAL work products must conform to the artifact, document, category, and commentary specifications for each task. Candidates are required to submit all artifacts, commentary, and relevant documents **without any information** that would identify them (e.g., candidate name), their school or district, individual students, staff, and others who were part of task completion.

Note that your evidence cannot contain hyperlinks to required uploads. Any web content you wish to include as part of your evidence must be submitted as a document file, which must conform to the file type requirements listed below.

Please refer directly to the Artifacts, Documents, and Commentary section of Task 1 in this handbook for detailed requirements pertaining to the intent and content requirements of each file.

PAL Task 1 Evidence Chart				
Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement				
Part	Work Product/Evidence	Specifications (if identified)	# of Files	Acceptable File Types
Part A	Confidentiality and Anonymity	Template provided	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part B	Artifact 1—Priority Academic Area and Its Context	Max 3 single-spaced pages (no more than 1,500 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part C	Artifact 2—The Plan for Action Strategies	Max 4 single-spaced pages (no more than 2,000 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf

PAL Task 1 Evidence Chart				
Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement				
Part D	Artifact 3—Findings, Feedback, and Recommendations	Max 3 single-spaced pages (no more than 1,500 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part E	Category Documents 1) School Context and Demographics 2) School Mission and Improvement Plan 3) School and District Priorities 4) Data-Collection Forms 5) Feedback	Separate file(s) for each of these 5 file categories	5	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part F	Commentary	2 single-spaced pages (no more than 1,000 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
The maximum size for any individual file is 500 megabytes (MB). There is no limit on the number of MB uploaded for an entire task. The success of an upload through any application depends heavily on the type of network, the file size, and the network capacity at upload time.				

**Note:** Scorers are not required to read artifacts and commentary that either exceed or do not meet the requirements. Submissions that fall far short of the required word length are likely to lack sufficient information and detail, which would adversely affect how the scorers evaluate the work products and thus the candidate’s potential score.

If any submitted materials do not meet the [Submission Requirements](#), a condition code may be applied during the scoring process instead of a numerical score. If a condition code is applied to **any indicator**, the entire task will be unscorable. If your complete submission, or portions thereof, cannot be scored due to failure to meet the Submission Requirements, you will need to take the operational version of Task 1.

## Submission Readiness

Scorers will be reviewing your submission to determine if you have complied with the PAL Submission Requirements located at the end of this handbook and on the [Pilot page of the program website](#). If your submission does not meet the Submission Requirements, a condition code may be applied during the scoring process instead of a numerical score. If a condition code is applied to any indicator or rubric, the entire task will be unscorable.

Review the Task 1 Evidence Chart in the Task 1 section of this handbook and on the [Pilot page of the program website](#) to confirm your completion of all required work products and specifications.

Before submitting, have you:

- Appropriately **blinded your submission with all candidate, school, district, staff, student, family, and community member—identifying information removed?**

Candidates are required to submit all artifacts, commentary, and relevant documents without any information that would identify them (e.g., candidate name), their school or district, individual students, staff, and others who were part of task completion. This includes screenshots, identifiable school logos and emblems, web addresses, URLs, and website graphics. Candidates must use generic labels (e.g., Principal A, School B, Teacher C, Teacher D), and **not** aliases, pseudonyms, or first names (e.g., Ms. Smith, Mr. Jones, Sally, Tom).

- Completed and uploaded the Confidentiality and Anonymity Form for this task?

To confirm that the work has been appropriately blinded, candidates must submit a completed Confidentiality and Anonymity Form with each task submission, in which they confirm that they have **removed all personally identifying information (e.g., candidate name) and the names of their school, district, staff, and others.**

The editable Confidentiality and Anonymity Form is provided within the ePortfolio system. Candidates are required to **check the boxes** and upload this form for each task.

- Addressed a **priority academic area** for the school?

A **priority academic area** is an area in which improved student performance is desired, with input from staff at the school and district levels, and with attention

to federally designated priority student groups or other groups that are a priority in the school.

■ Cited supporting documents?

Candidates are to cite supporting documents, submitted for each task, in the relevant artifacts for the same task.

Is the submission complete in that it contains all supporting documents in each category? Hyperlinks provided in lieu of required uploads are not permissible.

■ Clarified your role?

Candidates must **explain their role** in completing the tasks to ensure the authenticity of the work being submitted.

In addition, you must describe any and all points of collaboration with any other individual(s), include the rationale or purpose of the collaboration, and clearly state your role in the collaboration and the role(s) of your collaborators. Have you provided appropriate attribution(s) so that scorers are able to differentiate your original work from the work of others?

■ Demonstrated feedback collection and use of feedback evidence?

Throughout the four tasks, candidates are asked to collect, analyze, and use feedback on plans, strategies, and collaborative work. In written submissions and supporting documents, candidates must demonstrate that feedback was collected; report on the number and roles of people interviewed, surveyed, or consulted; present analyses; and draw conclusions about the feedback. It is insufficient to present only the candidate's conclusions about feedback received.

■ Proofread all documents?

Candidates are to proofread all documents before uploading to:

- Remove all names of the **candidate, school, district, staff, student, and family and community member—identifying information.**
- Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to compare each artifact against the instructions and rubrics before submission to ensure relevance and completeness.



After uploading into the ePortfolio system and before submitting, candidates are required to check their work to ensure that they do not upload duplicate artifacts and documents or blank files and that every file can be opened without error.

- Prepared all documents by category?

Submitted documents should be specific to the task and discussed and referenced in the relevant artifact(s). Complete school report cards, school improvement plans, and school handbooks should not be uploaded as documents. Only relevant tables of information or plan and handbook excerpts should be uploaded as category documents and discussed and referenced in the appropriate artifacts.

Documents must be legible. Handwritten agendas and minutes, for example, must be readable.

- Included an analysis of your leadership skills in the commentary?

The analysis of the candidate's leadership skills should be emphasized, regardless of whether the candidate feels the work on each task was successful. Include a description of how challenges were approached. Candidates should describe in detail, with specific examples, their leadership role throughout this task. Candidates should reflect on their leadership strengths and areas for growth, taking into consideration feedback gathered from relevant school community members.

- Reviewed the rubrics for this task?

Read the descriptions of each rubric in the next section. The rubrics will be used to score candidates' work. Before submitting, candidates are strongly encouraged to evaluate their work using the rubrics.

## **Task 1: Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement Rubrics**

### **How Will the Evidence of Your Leadership Practice Be Assessed?**

As you prepare your artifacts and commentary, use the following rubrics to guide your thinking, planning, action, analysis, and presentation.

## Rubric 1.a: Investigate and Prepare a Vision

MA Standard 1. Instructional Leadership: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes effective teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.

**How does the candidate gather and analyze data to identify a priority academic area and student focal group?**

The primary sources of evidence for Rubric 1.a are Artifact 1, Category Documents, and Commentary.

In addition to these primary sources, relevant information found in other parts of the submission may impact the score for each rubric.

	<b>Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)</b>	<b>Developing (2.10 to 2.74)</b>	<b>Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)</b>	<b>Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)</b>
<b>1.a.1: Data collection</b>	<p>Collects data on just one data element.</p> <p>Limits data collection to only one or two years.</p> <p>Does not collect information for one or more student groups or designate a student focal group.</p>	<p>Collects data on two or more elements.</p> <p>Makes a weak connection between the selection of the priority academic area and the data collected.</p> <p>Collects data for at least one quantitative and at least one qualitative element.</p> <p>Collects two or more years of data for at least one element.</p> <p>Collects data for at least one student group and selects a student focal group.</p> <p>Collects little or no data that clarify the student</p>	<p>Collects data on three or more elements.</p> <p>Makes a clear connection between the selection of the priority academic area and the data collected.</p> <p>Collects data for at least two quantitative or at least two qualitative elements.</p> <p>Collects three or more years of data for at least one data element.</p> <p>Collects data for two or more student groups and selects a student focal group.</p> <p>Collects some relevant data from educators and/or students about</p>	<p>Collects data on three or more elements. Generates a hypothesis about the learning issues impacting student focal groups in a priority academic area to guide data collection.</p> <p>Collects data for at least two quantitative AND at least two qualitative elements.</p> <p>Collects three or more years of data for at least one data element.</p> <p>Collects data for two or more student groups and selects at least one student focal group.</p> <p>Collects relevant data from</p>

	Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)	Developing (2.10 to 2.74)	Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)	Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)
		focal group’s learning issues in the priority academic area.	performance and/or learning culture that help clarify some reasons for the student focal group’s learning issues in the priority academic area.	stakeholders (students, educators, etc.) that clarify the reasons for the student focal group’s learning issues in the priority academic area.
<b>1.a.2: Data analysis and priority definition</b>	Provides little or no analysis except to state the priority academic area or student group.  Presents some data, with little to no connection to the priority academic area or student focal group.	Presents some analysis of the data collected, with a weak connection to the identified priority academic area and student focal group.	Presents a comprehensive analysis of data collected with a clear connection to identify the priority academic area and student focal group.  Connects the data analysis and identification of the priority academic area and student focal group to school and district goals.	Analyzes, integrates, and interprets relevant data elements across multiple years to identify the priority academic area and student focal group.  Generates a defensible hypothesis about how to improve student outcomes in a priority academic area, based on the data collected and analyzed.  Makes a clear connection to existing school and district goals.
<b>1.a.3: Evaluation of existing</b>	Does not consider existing policies, practices, and	Identifies some existing policies, practices, and	Evaluates relevant existing policies, practices, and	Evaluates relevant existing policies, practices, and

	<b>Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)</b>	<b>Developing (2.10 to 2.74)</b>	<b>Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)</b>	<b>Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)</b>
<b>policies, practices, and programs</b>	programs in describing the priority academic area and improving equity and student outcomes.	programs, with limited connection to the priority academic area and improving equity and student outcomes.	programs, and identifies their strengths and challenges in relation to the priority academic area, including a gap analysis for the selected student focal group that addresses improving equity and student outcomes.	programs, and identifies their strengths and challenges in relation to the priority academic area, including a gap analysis for two or more student focal groups. Generates a hypothesis about how changes could lead to improved equity and student outcomes for the selected student focal group in the priority academic area.

## Rubric 1.b: Design an Integrated Plan for Actions to Develop and Implement Improvement in the Priority Academic Area

MA Standard 1. Instructional Leadership: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes effective teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.

MA Standard 2. Management and Operations: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, using resources to implement appropriate curriculum, staffing, and scheduling.

**How does the candidate design a vision and plan to improve student learning?**

The primary sources of evidence for Rubric 1.b are Artifact 2 and Commentary.

In addition to these primary sources, relevant information found in other parts of the submission may impact the score for each rubric.

	<b>Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)</b>	<b>Developing (2.10 to 2.74)</b>	<b>Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)</b>	<b>Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)</b>
<b>1.b.1: Vision plan and focus</b>	<p>Presents no vision.</p> <p>Proposes one general goal with no student learning outcome-based objective(s).</p> <p>Generally describes an area of focus.</p> <p>Does not reflect the school context or school culture in the plan.</p> <p>There is no connection between the plan and structural inequities, systemic biases, and gaps</p>	<p>Presents a weakly articulated vision.</p> <p>Identifies at least one well-defined goal with specific student learning outcomes.</p> <p>Creates a plan focus that generally reflects the analyzed data, school context, and school culture.</p> <p>There is little connection between the plan and structural inequities, systemic biases, and gaps</p>	<p>Presents a vision, well-defined goal(s), and specific student learning outcomes.</p> <p>Makes clear connections between the data analysis and the vision, goals and objectives, and a plan focus that reflects school context and culture.</p> <p>Takes into account structural inequities, systemic biases, and gaps and opportunities in</p>	<p>Presents a coherent and compelling vision, with well-defined measurement-based goals and objectives rooted in student learning outcomes.</p> <p>Draws on the findings from the data analysis and explains how school context and culture are related to the vision, goals, and priorities.</p> <p>Presents a clearly articulated theory of action</p>

	Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)	Developing (2.10 to 2.74)	Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)	Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)
	and opportunities in existing school policies and practices.	and opportunities in existing school policies and practices.	existing school policies and practices in stating the vision, goals, objectives, and plan focus.	that relates the vision, goals and objectives, and plan focus.  The vision, goals, objectives, and plan clearly address structural inequities, systemic biases, and gaps and opportunities in existing school policies and practices.
<b>1.b.2: Solicitation of input from school community members</b>	Solicits no input from key school community members at any time during the planning process.	Solicits some input from some school community members that minimally helps inform the selection of actions to improve student outcomes.	Solicits input and guidance from relevant school community members that directly informs the selection of actions to improve student outcomes.	Solicits strategic input and guidance from relevant school community members (e.g., school leaders, students, parents/guardians, community members) that informs the selection of plan actions and their implementation details.
<b>1.b.3: Plan details</b>	Identifies one or two actions without sufficient details to implement.  Makes no connection between the actions and the desired student outcomes and equity issues.	Describes one or two actions, along with responsibilities and resources, and some implementation details.  Makes limited connections between the plan actions and how they will improve student outcomes and address equity issues.  Makes little connection to the school context and	Describes two or more specific actions, along with concrete details about the responsibilities and resources required to implement them.  Explains how the actions relate to accomplish specific proposed student outcomes and addresses equity issues.  Aligns the plan to school	Describes two or more specific actions with extensive details about the responsibilities and resources required to implement them.  Makes clear and coherent connections between the analysis of the data, school culture, equity issues, and how the plan’s goals and actions relate to improved

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	<b>Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)</b>	<b>Developing (2.10 to 2.74)</b>	<b>Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)</b>	<b>Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)</b>
		culture.	context and culture.	student outcomes. Aligns the plan to school context and student culture and provides clear evidence of feasibility, including an assessment of potential consequences of implementation.



## Rubric 1.c: Assess and Analyze Feedback from Participants

MA Standard 1. Instructional Leadership: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes effective teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.

MA Standard 4. Professional Culture: Promotes success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff.

### How does the candidate use feedback in analyzing and planning for the priority academic area?

The primary sources of evidence for Rubric 1.c are Artifact 3 and Commentary.

In addition to these primary sources, relevant information found in other parts of the submission may impact the score for each rubric.

	<b>Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)</b>	<b>Developing (2.10 to 2.74)</b>	<b>Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)</b>	<b>Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)</b>
<b>1.c.1: Plan feedback</b>	<p>Provides no evidence of collecting feedback on the plan.</p> <p>Provides no evidence of plan revision.</p>	<p>Attempts to collect some school leaders’ feedback but provides minimal documentation in discussing the feedback.</p> <p>Collects feedback that is minimally related to the plan’s quality or relevance for improving equity and student outcomes in the priority academic area.</p> <p>Shows little or no evidence of soliciting feedback to improve the plan that could lead to revisions.</p>	<p>Collects, analyzes, and interprets specific feedback from school leaders or educators on the quality and relevance of the plan for improving equity and student outcomes in the priority academic area.</p> <p>Uses feedback to discuss school culture, climate, and context, including structural inequities and systemic biases.</p> <p>Shows how leaders’ or educators’ feedback was</p>	<p>Collects, analyzes, and interprets detailed feedback from school leaders, educators, and other school community members on the quality and relevance of the plan for improving equity and student outcomes in the priority academic area.</p> <p>Provides a thorough analysis of feedback to evaluate school culture, climate, and context, as well as structural inequities and systemic biases.</p>

	Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)	Developing (2.10 to 2.74)	Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)	Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)
			used to shape the final plan.	Provides detailed evidence on how feedback was used to make specific revisions to the plan.
<b>1.c.2: Assessment of leadership skills and practices</b>	Discusses leadership in general, if at all, and with little attention to this task.	Conducts a general analysis of some leadership skills and practices used in completing this task without drawing on specific experiences.  Recaps the steps taken in completing the task with little evaluation of their leadership skills.	Evaluates relevant leadership skills and practices needed to complete this task by drawing on specific experiences.  Identifies what worked well and what they could have done differently.  Identifies changes that could be made to improve their leadership skills in the future.	Evaluates relevant leadership skills and practices needed to complete this task, based on their experiences, and describes how they adjusted leadership practices throughout the task.  Solicits feedback on their leadership skills from school community members involved in this task.  Identifies what worked well and what they could have done differently and proposes specific steps to improve their practice.

# Submission Requirements and Condition Codes

## Condition Codes

In order for your PAL submission to be scored, it must meet the [Submission Requirements](#). If your submission does not meet these requirements and your submission or a portion of your submission is deemed unscorable, the task(s) will be marked as “Incomplete,” and your associated score report will specify one or more of the following “Condition Codes,” indicating the requirement(s) that were not met. Where applicable, examples of reasons why a particular condition code may be assigned are provided as an illustration for candidates. Please note, however, that these are examples only and not a complete list of reasons.

Condition Code	General Reason for Condition Code	Associated Task(s)	
		1	2
B	Does not address a priority academic area related to student academic performance	✓	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Does not include all supporting documents, or;</li> <li>■ Incorrect file provided, or;</li> <li>■ Missing artifact or referenced artifact not submitted, or;</li> <li>■ Blank or incomplete artifact submitted, or;</li> <li>■ Inaccessible file (file could not be opened for technical reasons), or;</li> <li>■ Hyperlinks are provided in lieu of required evidence, or;</li> <li>■ Confidentiality and Anonymity Form has not been completed or is missing</li> </ul>	✓	✓
E	Does not describe a working group and/or does not include family or community input		✓
F	A strategy was not implemented		✓
X	No numeric score due to Condition Code(s) elsewhere in task	✓	✓

**Condition Code B** may be assigned to uploads throughout Tasks 1–2 if your work does not address a priority academic area related to student academic performance.

**Condition Code C** may be assigned to uploads throughout Tasks 1–2 if:

- All required files/documents are not uploaded.
- Blank or incomplete artifacts are submitted.
- Incorrect files are provided.
- Inaccessible files are uploaded (files could not be opened for technical reasons).
- Missing artifacts or referenced artifacts are not submitted.
- Hyperlinks to external files are provided in lieu of required uploads. Note: Hyperlinks are acceptable only as references in your citations but will not be used by scorers to access information outside of your submission.
- Confidentiality and Anonymity Form has not been completed or is missing.

**Condition Code E** may be assigned to uploads in Task 2 if your work does not describe a working group.

**Condition Code F** may be assigned to uploads in Task 2 if your work does not include evidence that (for Task 2) a PLC was formed for the purposes of professional learning in the priority academic area.

# Assessment Policies

The [Pilot page of the program website](#) contains Registration, Assessment, and Score Reporting Policies.

Candidates are expected to review the policies and will be required to confirm as part of the registration and submission processes.

# Glossary

**All students.** Given that some student groups have been historically underserved, and that any student can be particularly “vulnerable” at any moment in time, it is important to consider practices and outcomes beyond the aggregate to ensure that all students are challenged and supported to learn and grow. The phrase “all students” in this document refers to equity for and attention to students from all backgrounds and identities and experiences. These include but are not limited to all races and ethnicities, all genders and gender identities, all sexual orientations, all disabilities, all nationalities, all types of citizenship or immigration status, all religions, all family structures, all family housing situations, all medical/health needs, and all traumatic experiences.

**Anti-racist leader.** An anti-racist leader believes that racial groups are equals in all their differences and continually engages in self-reflective work that leads to educational policies, practices, conditions, and cultures that resist and dismantle inequities due to individual and systemic racism to advance racial equity.

**Artifacts.** Artifacts are primary sources of evidence created by the PAL candidate and required for scoring. Each task description designates required artifacts that are described in the *Candidate Assessment Handbook*. Examples include memos, reports, video recordings, completed templates, and proposals.

**Bias.** Bias is a disproportionate weight that may be created intentionally or unintentionally in favor of or against an idea, thing, individual, or group.

**Blinding.** Blinding is the required removal of all personally identifying information from all task submission files prior to uploading. This includes any information that may identify a candidate, district, school, university, students, faculty, and staff, as well as any person(s) who appear in videos.

**Category documents.** Category documents are required supporting documents (data reports, school improvement plans, surveys, agendas, etc.) that are specific to the task and category in which they have been collected or developed. Each task description in the *Candidate Assessment Handbook* defines the required category documents.

**Collaboration.** Candidates are encouraged to collaborate with others; however, each candidate must submit original work products, in their own words, including written artifacts and commentary, even when the work is created collaboratively. As required in the Rules of Assessment Participation 2.B.1, the candidate must identify any and all points of collaboration with any other individual(s), include the rationale or purpose of the collaboration, and clearly state their role in the collaboration and the role(s) of the collaborators. Appropriate

attribution(s) must be provided so that scorers are able to differentiate the candidate's original work from the work of others.

**Commentary.** A commentary is an original narrative written by the candidate in response to a series of prompts about the development of their leadership skills while completing each task. Commentaries are not intended to be collaborative, but are an individual's reflections on leadership skills used to complete task work. Each task description in the *Candidate Assessment Handbook* includes directions and prompts for the commentary.

**Culturally responsive.** Cultural responsiveness is an approach to viewing students' culture and identity (including race, ethnicity, multilingualism, and other characteristics) as assets and creating learning experiences and environments that value and empower them.

### **Culturally and linguistically sustaining practice**

- 1) Affirms and values students' cultures, prior experiences, and linguistic resources to make learning more relevant and effective while building community and developing student agency.
- 2) Promotes teaching and learning principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy of academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness; a framework that "not only addresses student achievement but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
- 3) Values multilingualism as an asset and honors multilingual learners' languages to be leveraged, learned, and sustained through meaningful engagement in activities that are valued in their homes, schools, and communities.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis is a systematic process used to organize and evaluate data using analytic and logical reasoning for the purpose of uncovering useful information and gaining insights to solve a problem.

**Data element.** Data elements are the specific components that are collected, reviewed, and examined, such as measures of student performance in MCAS scores, attitudes and experiences in survey responses, attributes of classroom practices drawn from observations, participation rates, or attributes of student work. One or more data elements can be gathered from one data source.

**Data source.** A data source is the entity supplying the data, such as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website for performance and demographic data, or individuals, such as educators, parents/guardians, students, and school

leaders who provide information through surveys, interviews, and other types of data collection.

**Disaggregated student data.** Disaggregated student data refers to aggregate student data that are broken down into smaller parts in order to learn about the performance, opportunities, and outcomes of specific student populations, for example, schools, grade levels, and student groups. Extreme caution should be used when interpreting data for small numbers of students. Results reported for only a small number of students may not provide a valid indication of how such students typically perform.

**Equity.** Equity exists when one's identity (including but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, and ability) can no longer be used to predict social, economic, and educational outcomes. Enacting steps toward equity means ensuring that opportunities and supports to eliminate bias and structural barriers are operationalized at every level of the education system and society.

Educational equity means that all students have access to the educational resources, opportunities, and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and/or family income to meet high expectations for cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional growth and development.

**Feedback.** Feedback entails soliciting information from stakeholders about specific attributes of a plan, strategy, or experience, such as its quality, feasibility, and relevance to achieving the desired outcome. Feedback is not just an endorsement or agreement about a plan, strategy, or experience. The purpose of collecting feedback is to make revisions to the plan, strategy, or experience to improve the likelihood that it will accomplish the desired outcome.

**Identity groups.** Identity groups are groups in which individuals are members based on their social identity, which may include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or citizenship.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is pursuing deliberate actions to create welcoming environments and ensuring that differences are actively sought and heard and that every individual feels a sense of belonging and a role in impacting decision-making, practices, and policies.

**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality is the idea that people's various identities intersect in ways that impact how they are viewed, understood, and treated (first articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw).

**Priority academic area.** A priority academic area is an area in which improved student performance is desired based on input from staff at the school and district levels and with



attention to federally designated priority student groups or other groups that are a priority in the school. Candidates are required to provide evidence that demonstrates the chosen subject or performance area and target student group are priorities.

**State and federal student accountability groups.** State-designated student accountability groups include students who have been historically marginalized or underserved by our education systems, including but not limited to those who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Indigenous, or multiracial; students with disabilities; English Learners (EL); LGBTQIA+; students experiencing homelessness and/or financial insecurity; and students who are undocumented. Federally designated groups include students with disabilities; English Learners (EL); African American, Hispanic, and Native American students; economically disadvantaged students; and students performing below state proficiency levels.

**Strategy.** A strategy is a new approach or modification of an existing approach aimed at achieving a desired outcome. Strategies are designed to address a specific measurable objective or measurable objectives that quantify the desired level of change. Strategies are composed of a series of steps, which specify the actions that need to be taken to effectively implement the strategy.

**Student group.** A student group is any group of students who share similar characteristics, such as racial or ethnic identification; gender identifications; socioeconomic statuses; physical or learning disabilities; or language skills. This includes, but is not limited to, the groups of students for which DESE issues annual performance determinations.

**Systemically marginalized groups.** Systemically marginalized groups are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion on a systemic level because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. These groups include but are not limited to race, culture, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, and ability. Significant disparities exist for marginalized people.