



# Pilot Task 2 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

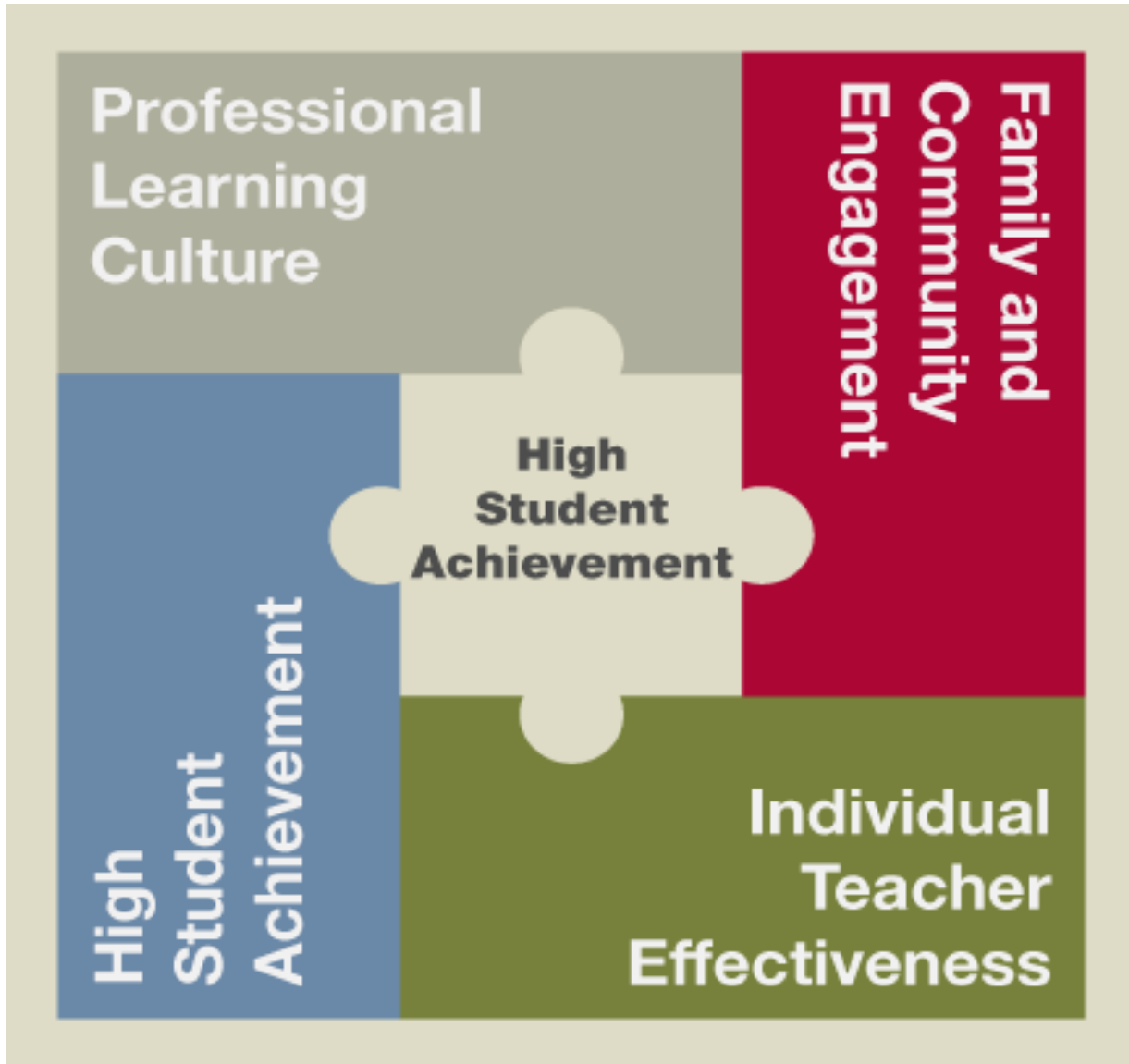
Task 4: Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement

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.



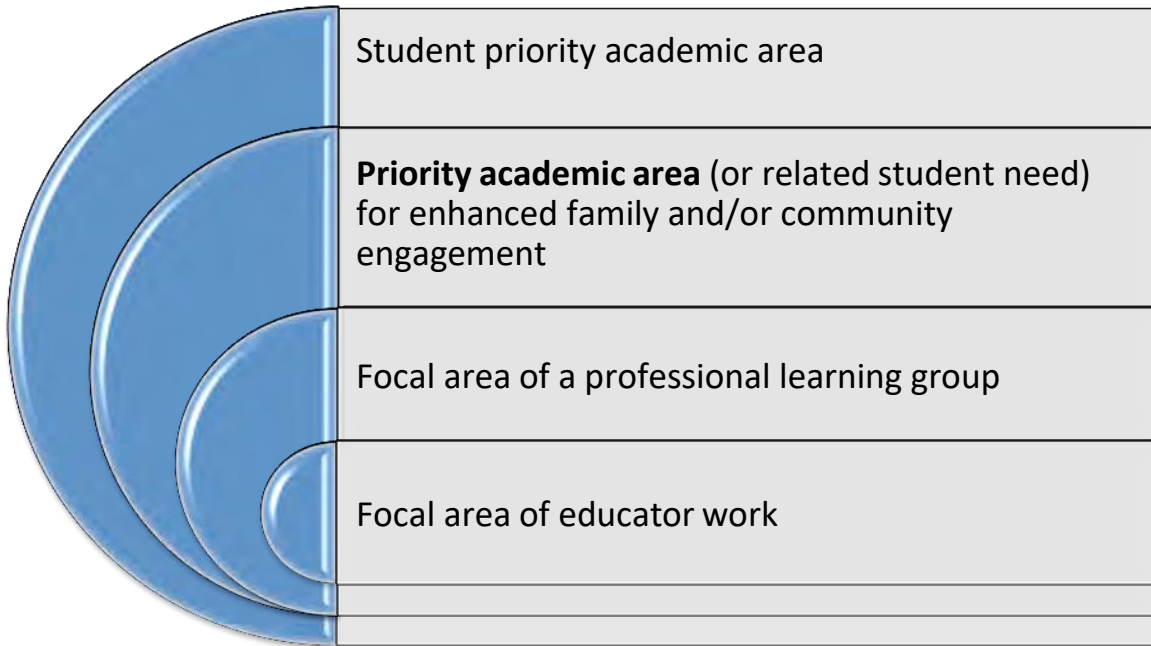


Figure 2. Nested Relationship of Priority Academic Areas

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

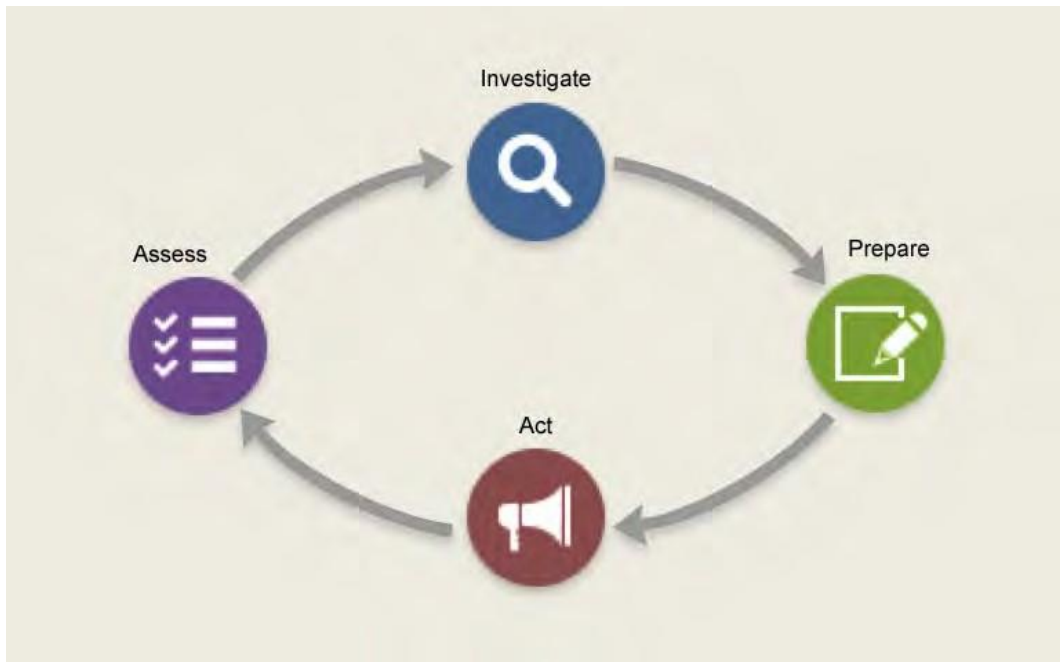


Figure 3. The Components of Leadership Action

## **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.

## 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 2

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### Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture

#### What Do School Leaders Need to Think about When Creating a Professional Learning Culture through Professional Learning Groups?

Task 2 requires school leadership candidates to demonstrate how to foster school improvement by developing and supporting professional learning groups composed of educators in their school who reflect multiple perspectives. A candidate works with two to five educators as a professional learning group by engaging in structured learning activities with the goal of improving educator practice in a student **priority academic area**, a curricular subject or student performance area in which student learning needs are not being met or systemic barriers to student learning exist. Candidates are required to provide evidence that demonstrates the student **priority academic area** aligns with school and district plans and goals and takes account of existing differences in academic outcomes among student groups. A candidate can identify the same or a similar **priority academic area** for Tasks 1, 2, 3, and/or 4, but for Task 4 candidates have the option to focus on student health, emotional, and/or social needs that impact student learning.

The candidate facilitates the work of the group as they define a specific aspect of student learning within the larger **priority academic area** as their focus and define a professional learning goal. Working together, group members identify new curricula, instructional approaches, assessment procedures, student engagement strategies, and/or additional educator practices to explore as a group and try out individually. Group members then share their results collectively to improve one another's practice.

Task 2 assesses your capacity to create and facilitate a professional learning culture among a small group of educators over a designated period of time. Through this process, group members will build their cultural competency with the goal of improving learning outcomes for all students. Your aims as facilitator are to establish inclusive group-learning norms and practices; promote professional learning; and lead the group in exploring evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining curriculum, instruction, and/or assessments. Using structured group-building<sup>4</sup> and group process activities, you will prepare, facilitate, support, and assess the group's collective learning and the learning of the individual educators in the group.

You will foster and facilitate an ongoing professional learning group by actively engaging

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<sup>4</sup> Also known as *team building*.

interested educators in a collaborative process to determine and/or investigate a student **priority academic area** and a common instructional focus designed to improve educator practice in the selected **priority academic area**. This is not intended to be specific professional development in which a group of educators are passive recipients of information regarding a pre-determined topic.

Your work on this task should directly relate to the [Massachusetts Professional Standards and Indicators for Administrative Leadership](#). You can draw on [Massachusetts’s recommended guidelines for school and district team data use and inquiry](#).

Schools have three interrelated cultures: professional culture, student culture, and the culture of family engagement and community involvement. This task focuses on developing an equity-based learning orientation within the school’s professional culture to improve student learning.

Consider the school’s professional culture with respect to groups and group processes. Schools use different approaches to structure and support educators’ work in groups. Some approaches are based on the organizational structure within the school, with groups formed within departments or within grade levels, while other approaches are ad hoc or informal. Some staff are trained in norms and practices and are supported under the group-learning models of “professional learning communities” or “communities of practice.” Some do not receive training at all on how to be part of a learning group.

The nature of the school’s professional learning culture with respect to the use of groups to increase each educator’s learning will bear on how new or existing groups of educators work on improving their instructional practice in the priority academic area.

For additional information on professional learning groups, see the Massachusetts Tools for Schools [Professional Learning Communities Resource Modules](#).

As you conduct work for Task 2, **intentional equity pauses** will be provided at several junctures to encourage your reflection. (See “[What Is an Intentional Equity Pause?](#)” in the Introduction.)

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

- Identify a student **priority academic area** for improvement in educator practice and begin to organize a group of educators for collective learning.

- Document relevant school context information, including student demographics, student academic performance data, and school and district goals and vision, as well as norms or practices within the school culture that may lead to inequities in the student **priority academic area**.
- Consider the nature of the current school culture for educator groups and group-based professional learning, the policies and structures (such as meeting time, space, and resources) that support professional learning, and how these factors would shape your group work. Describe any existing types of educator groups, their membership, and how they are used in the school.
- Identify and invite educators who reflect multiple perspectives to be members of a professional learning group related to the student **priority academic area** and provide a rationale for their inclusion. If assigned a group, explain how the group is to be engaged specifically around the student **priority academic area**.
- Work with this group to identify an area of focus within the student **priority academic area** for group learning and improving practice and to develop shared group norms and inclusive practices that value all members of the educator group.
- Engage in individual and group reflection activities to develop understanding of the identities, including intersectional identities; assumptions; and systemic biases that can affect school cultures, educator practice, and student learning.
- Collect evidence of the group members' roles in selecting the specific focus within the student **priority academic area** and of their learning activities, including information about the evidence-based curriculum, instruction, assessment, and engagement practices that group members explore and try out.
- Support individual educators with ongoing feedback as they try out new practices or take steps to improve existing instructional practices and share their experiences with the group.
- Collect evidence on new or improved educator practices that group members implement (individually or collectively) and analyze their initial impact on access to learning and student outcomes (e.g., student engagement, student work samples, student feedback).
- Analyze your leadership practice in supporting the group's professional learning. Collect feedback from group members on their perceived effectiveness as a group, individual and group learning, improvement of practice, and their evaluation of your facilitation and support.



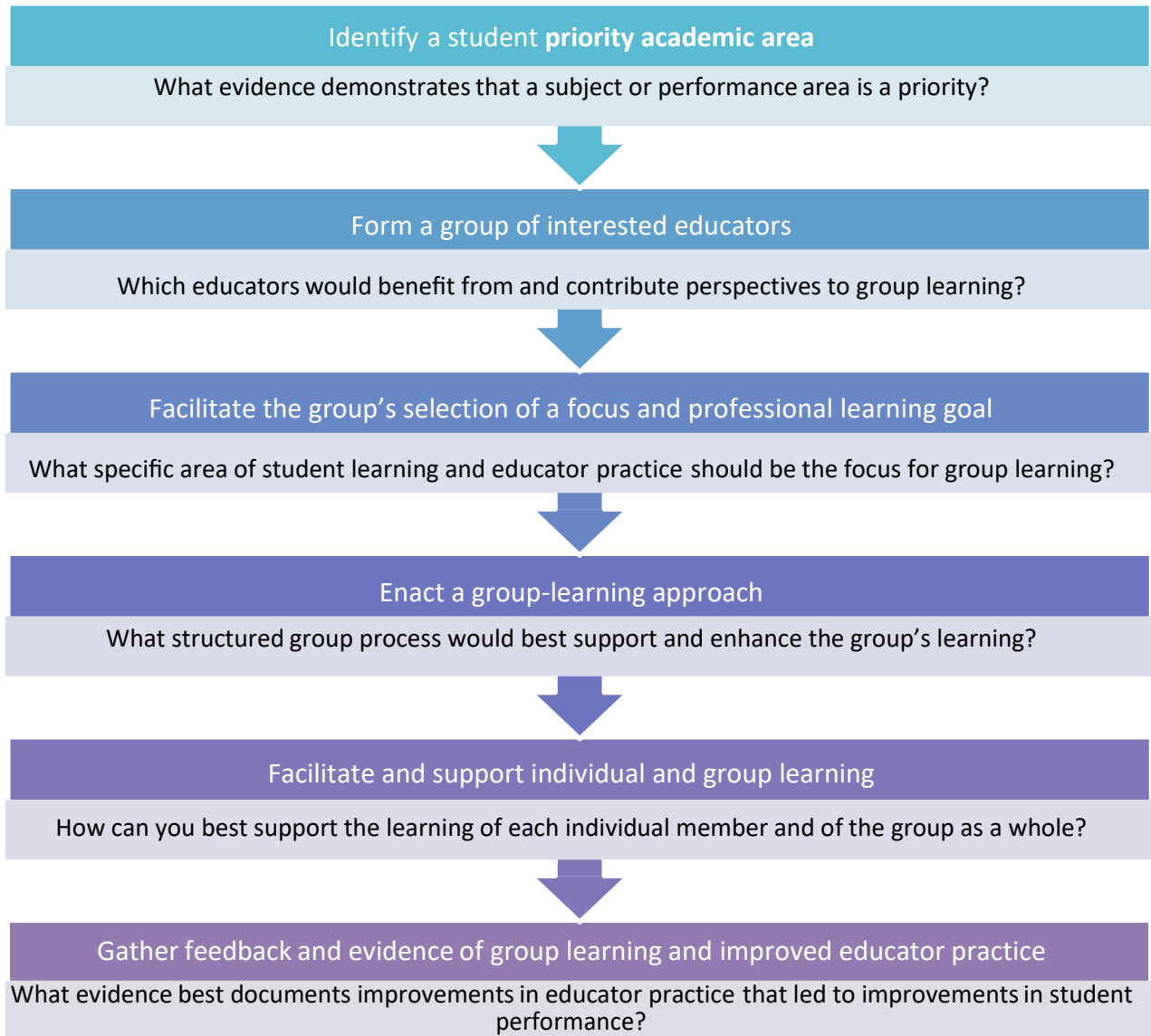
## **What Do You Need to Consider to Complete This Task?**

- Which priority academic area should be prioritized in the group’s professional learning? Can improved educator practice in this area address unmet student learning needs and/or begin to dismantle systemic barriers that limit access to learning for some groups of students?
- Does this priority academic area directly relate to a specific department/grade level, or does it relate to the work of educators from multiple departments and/or grade levels? How can you ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the group?
- Where does group-based professional learning fit into the school’s culture? What norms exist regarding adult learning at the school? How will the group members establish inclusive, equitable norms for conducting collaborative learning?
- What evidence-based adult learning activities will best support the group’s professional growth while addressing individual or group assumptions? What will effective facilitation of these activities look like?
- How will the group choose a common instructional focus within the priority academic area for study? How does the group’s chosen focus relate to school context information, as well as district priorities? How does the focus disrupt potential barriers for students accessing the priority academic area?
- How will the group choose which new or improved evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining educator practices to pilot? How does the group think students will benefit from the newly implemented practices?
- How will the group assess the actual impact on student performance of the newly implemented professional practices? What types of data will the group collect? Which of the group’s findings may be of interest to all educators at the school?
- How will you collect feedback from group members about your leadership and facilitation of group activities? What evidence do you need to assess the benefits of this professional learning experience for the educator group?

## The Components of the Task

The four components of this task require working with a group of educators and additional staff to address a student **priority academic area** through a group professional learning cycle as shown in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1. Task 2 Group Professional Learning Cycle**



## **Component 1: Investigate**

Before you begin your investigation, engage in critical reflection guided by the following question:

**What are my values and beliefs with regard to the students and educators in my school, the school context, and the historical role of schools and schooling in the United States in perpetuating systemic racism and inequity?**

As you reflect, consider 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. How do your identities relate to and interact with identities in your school community and in the broader society? To what extent have assumptions and biases associated with the dominant culture shaped your practice as an educator and a leader? What steps can you take to dismantle assumptions and implicit biases—your own and those of members of the school community—and contribute to a school culture that is responsive to the needs of every student?

Identifying assumptions and implicit biases that may affect educator and leadership practice is a critical step in beginning your investigation. Throughout Task 2, continue to reflect on how educators can intentionally confront assumptions and biases to promote learning for all students and success for all educators.

Next, select a student **priority academic area** for this task by analyzing data to identify a student learning need where differences exist between the academic performance of specific student groups that might be attributed to systemic barriers to student learning. The student **priority academic area** should relate to school and district priorities, planning, and goals and take account of existing student group performance differences. You can identify the same or a similar **priority academic area** for Tasks 1, 2, and/or 3.

**A student priority academic area should be based on student performance indicators for one or more student groups, considering in particular state or federally designated student accountability groups, or groups that are a priority in your school.**

Identify the nature of existing educator groups (e.g., grade level, department, content area, special interest) in the school community. Then, with input from one or more school and educator leaders, select a group of two to five educators to form a professional working group that you will work with to improve educator practice, confront barriers to student learning, and improve outcomes in the student **priority**

academic area.

**Educators can increase equitable access to learning and improve student outcomes by focusing on and strengthening one or more areas of educator practice: their instructional content knowledge, their pedagogical practices, their understanding of student development and learning, and the integration of the relationship among these critical components into their practice.**

The educators can be part of an existing group or can make up a new group. While you should select educators who share one or more areas of practice (e.g., teaching a common grade or content area), it is important that the group reflect multiple **perspectives** (e.g., demographic diversity, different expertise within content areas or grade bands, different levels of professional experience with state or federally designated student accountability groups). For example, you might select one educator who has taught at the school for more than ten years, one educator who has recently joined the faculty after teaching for several years in a district with a different demographic profile, and one educator in their first year of teaching.

### **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.**

***Does the student priority academic area relate to the work of a broad range of educators at the school, or is it limited to specific departments and/or grade levels? How might this impact the diversity of perspectives within the group?***

***Whose voices are you including in the group? Are any voices excluded? How might your colleagues at the school perceive the group and the member selection process?***

***Are undue representational burdens placed on any members of the group because of their identities? Might this cause harm to the group members or to all members of the school community?***

Reach out to the educators you have selected and confirm their participation in the group. Determine their strengths, interests, and challenges related to the student **priority academic area** and assess their related prior knowledge and skills, their expectations for group learning, and relevant school and student cultural influences. In addition, arrange a meeting time (during or outside the school day) and schedule for a series of meetings to foster the professional learning of the group over time.

Finally, as part of getting started, determine together which group-learning approach to use (such as a professional learning community, community of practice, collaborative action research, or other action-oriented learning approach). Develop a plan for how the group will establish norms, collaborate, share responsibilities, manage agendas and minutes, and use protocols to facilitate inquiry and learning. The plan must be culturally responsive and inclusive of the multiple perspectives reflected in the group, honor the strengths and challenges of individual group members, and respect the specific needs of each group member. For example, meeting schedules should respect the professional and personal obligations of group members.

**Consider school-level conditions that hinder or foster opportunities for educators to work together on curriculum, instruction, and assessment; ways to establish a common planning time for this task; and how frequently the group can meet. Also, consider barriers within the school context that may inhibit some educators from participating fully in collaborative learning activities, as well as actions that can mitigate and begin to dismantle such barriers.**

## **Component 2: Prepare**

Before the professional learning group can begin to work toward improvement in the student **priority academic area**, members must work together to establish norms for group learning. Establishing norms that are inclusive and culturally responsive, and that honor the backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges of each group member, is critical to ensuring an environment in which all group members are safe to share and contribute to learning. This process includes setting regular meeting times, having agendas and keeping minutes, assigning roles and responsibilities in the group-learning process, and using protocols and tools to facilitate inquiry and learning. All members of the group should contribute to and endorse the group-learning norms.

With shared norms in place, begin professional learning by engaging group members in critical reflection guided by the following questions:

**What structural inequities may exist or be reflected in our educator practice and in our student learning environments?**

**In what ways do our identities, assumptions, and biases affect how we interact with our students and with colleagues?**

**To what extent may our identities, assumptions, and biases support or impede this group's learning?**

**Group reflection activities allow individuals in a group to clarify and share their own thinking about a topic, as well as to better understand the perspectives of individuals in the group. When a new group is formed, reflection activities help members develop common understandings, shared trust, and group norms. Engaging in these activities can also help members examine individual and group assumptions and give/receive authentic feedback.**

**Consider incorporating reflective activities as part of all group meetings. In addition to facilitating activities, ask group members if they have reflective activities that they would like to lead with the group. Remember, the facilitator should not be expected to generate every idea or lead every activity for the group.**

Following these critical reflection activities, help group members deepen their understanding of the student **priority academic area** through a series of structured group meetings and identify a specific aspect of student learning as their focus. Work with group members to collect, analyze, and synthesize quantitative and qualitative data relevant to educator practice, including their own practice. The group's analysis should include, but not be limited to, curriculum materials, lesson plans, classroom observations, and formative and summative assessments, as well as data on student learning environments (e.g., classroom norms and expectations, student surveys, educator feedback to students, physical organization of classrooms, students' full learning profiles).

**Consider the group members' individual and collective strengths, interests, and needs in relation to the priority academic area, drawing on relevant professional learning and adult development theory and research.**

Next, help the group identify a measurable professional learning goal that includes objectives for group learning and steps that each educator takes to build their cultural competency and improve their own practice. The goal should be designed around changes to educator practice that confront barriers to student learning by improving course content, instruction, or student engagement and support. The goal should increase students' access to learning and lead to improved student learning outcomes.

Consider a professional learning goal that enables group members to give constructive feedback to one another and proactively engage with new instructional practices for the priority academic area.

For example, the professional learning goal might include an objective for group members to share evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining educator practices. Another objective might be for group members to learn from one another by

trying, monitoring, and collecting feedback on the effects of new or improved practices, particularly to support students with diverse assets and instructional or learning needs. As an extension of these objectives, identify the key ideas that the group members are developing and improvement strategies they are trying in their student learning environments, relating them to the school context and desired outcomes.

### **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.**

***How does your facilitation ensure that the perspectives of each individual member are valued and that all members play active roles? Are leadership opportunities and responsibilities (e.g., taking minutes, planning meetings, researching topics) shared among all members?***

***What process did the group use to identify and adopt norms for this professional learning group? How did the group come to articulate a professional learning goal that each member could accept and work toward?***

***How does the group address differences between members regarding ideas and opinions? Does the group seek consensus? What is the facilitator's role in such situations?***

Finally, determine what resources and supports you need to provide to the group members in order to foster learning during meetings. Determine how you will support group members' efforts to proactively engage with new and/or improved practices in each of their learning environments and to monitor and document the impacts on equitable student learning.

## Component 3: Act

In the meetings, facilitate the work of the group members as they explore, change, and improve their educator practice and, in turn, confront barriers to student learning and improve student outcomes in the priority academic area. Use a collaborative learning process consisting of *preparing*, *acting*, and *assessing*. Expect that such collaboration will require at least three meetings over time.

Begin by leading the group in exploring evidence-based educator practices that are culturally responsive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, identity affirming, and anti-racist. Direct the group's learning toward identifying one or more new educator practices or improvements to existing practices that group members will implement, with the goal of increasing every student's access to learning and improving student outcomes in the focus area. Examples include the following:

- A new or revised curricular unit that reflects students' racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity (such as a unit related to [the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#)).
- A new or improved instructional practice (such as performance-based learning or culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction embedded within a subject-matter curriculum found at [Mass Literacy—Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)).
- A new or improved assessment practice (such as formative and interim assessments aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, a performance assessment that accounts for students' full learning profiles, or adjustments to instruction after a collaborative analysis of formative assessment data to increase equity in learning).
- New or revised student engagement strategies (such as identity-affirming approaches to differentiated instruction, culturally responsive communication, or positive student behavior supports).

**Access the Center for Instructional Support's [Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](#) for information and resources.**

As the group identifies new educator practices and/or improvements to existing practices, work with group members to plan for implementing the practices. Ensure that group members have access to support and resources that will help them try out the new and improved practices between group meetings and document outcomes. Facilitate group analysis of each member's outcomes in order to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to the new and/or improved practices.



**Consider which aspects of changing practice are, or may be, the most difficult for educators to accomplish. Determine how to engage both the group as a whole and individual members, particularly educators who support students with specific learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities, students who are English Learners [EL], gifted and talented students).**

Your role as facilitator and support provider, which is critical to the group-learning process, includes the following:

- Ensuring that group members have access to resources related to evidence-based, culturally responsive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, identity-affirming, and anti-racist educator practices.
- Convening regular meetings for group members to prepare, implement, and assess their work.
- Ensuring that agendas and minutes are maintained.
- Coaching the group process, using learning protocols and tools, and reinforcing shared group-learning norms and anti-racist principles.
- Supporting individual and group reflection on how their identities, assumptions, and biases affect their ongoing work.
- Facilitating group learning through the full inquiry cycle (plan, act, monitor and assess, draw conclusions and implications).
- Facilitating problem solving.
- Documenting the work of the group, including exploration of new and improved practices, group-learning and reflection activities, and implementation experiences.
- Assisting in implementing and assessing new and improved educator practices.
- Providing support to individual group members as they try out new educator practices and/or work to improve existing practices.
- Maintaining the group's focus and energy.
- Assessing progress, including members' capacity to learn as a group, changes in educator practice, and impact on student access to learning and outcomes.

### **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 are group members' expectations of you as a facilitator? Are their understandings and assumptions about the role different from your own? How can the differences be reconciled?*

*Are the group's shared norms a good match for your facilitation style? What support is effective for group members as they make decisions, review evidence related to the professional goal, and give/receive feedback?*

*How have group members conducted conversations? What does effective facilitation look like when group members are not in agreement? Are all voices in the group being heard? Has your facilitation caused harm in any way? What steps did you take to repair that harm?*

Throughout the group-learning process, continue to engage group members in reflection activities. Use these activities to guide group members in reflecting on their experiences implementing new or improved educator practices, as well as on how their identities, assumptions, and biases affect their ongoing work individually and the collective work of the group.

### **Component 4: Assess**

Assess whether and how the educator practices of the group members change and improve through the group-learning process and their individual learning efforts. Describe your own and the members' roles in the group-learning process of *preparing*, *acting*, and *assessing*.

Through a feedback form or group discussion, ask the members to comment on and evaluate the group-learning process, the quality of the professional guidance and support they received from one another and from you, and what they believe changed in their knowledge and skills as a result of their exploration of evidence-based practices, tryout work, and individual and group reflections. The focus should be on what the group members learned about their own practices, the changes they adopted or used, and what they learned from these changes. Ask group members to comment on their participation in critical reflection and how group and individual reflections affected their understanding of systemic inequities in education and how they can address barriers to student learning. In addition, seek feedback from group members on their interest in

further collaborative inquiry and the potential for sustaining the work of the group.

### **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 is the group's assessment of its own learning? Are there improvements in practice that may be of interest to educators at the school outside of the group? How can you share those improvements appropriately?*

*How did you decide which questions to ask as you solicited group members' feedback regarding your facilitation? Did your questions for group members encourage open responses and the sharing of perspectives?*

*What group member feedback proved most useful to you? Did some feedback align with your own experiences with the group? Were you surprised by any of the feedback you received?*

Document the implementation of new or changed educator practices. Where possible, solicit group members' feedback on how changes in their practices affected access to learning in the student **priority academic area**, as well as their evidence of the impact, benefits, and challenges.

**Consider how the group's professional learning activities enhance each member's professional growth and development related to improving instructional practices for better student performance. How can the members sustain their work individually or within the group and use their learning process as a foundation to build group and school capacity?**

In addition, analyze what you learned from the group-building and group-learning experiences and solicit feedback from the group members about your facilitation skills. Draw on theory, research, and best practices in leadership development, critical reflection, professional group building, and group learning, as well as on the role of interpersonal skills in group facilitation.

Finally, identify challenges and successes in facilitating group building and learning, including how you guided group members in critical reflection and enabled them to take responsibility in confronting systemic barriers to student learning and initiating change. As you develop a detailed analysis of leadership skills used to complete this task, include specific examples of those leadership skills and specific examples of what worked well

and what could be improved. Focus your analysis on the steps you took to assemble a team that reflected multiple perspectives; identify a student **priority academic area** and focus; promote a positive, inclusive, and productive group-learning environment; and provide support to the group as well as individual members. Avoid simply recapping the steps you took to complete the task and instead focus on the **analysis of your leadership** in completing the task. Draw implications from this work for improving your group-building and group-learning facilitation skills for the future.

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## **Artifacts, Documents, and Commentary**

This section provides instructions for school leadership candidate submissions 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.
- Your 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.

### **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 2.

#### **Artifact 1: Description of the Priority Academic Area and the Group**

In a **memo** of up to two single-spaced pages (up to 1,000 words) written by you to the principal or superintendent, explain the academic priority focus area and the group of educators that will address it. Include the following specifically:

- A description of the student **priority academic area** you identified for group learning and the focus within this area that the group selected for its learning together. Explain how the group decided on its area of focus and how you facilitated a group decision to narrow its focus within the priority academic area. You should include

input received from the school’s administrative team, the group’s use of data, and how you considered competing priorities and demands. As part of this task, include the following information:

- An analysis and interpretation of student demographic, academic performance, and other relevant data on the importance of this student **priority academic area**, with reference sources provided as appropriate.
- An explanation of the focus that the group selected for its learning and improvement work (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment) as a means of addressing the student **priority academic area**.
- A brief explanation of the relationship between the focus and the school or district priorities and practices.
- An explanation of how school context and student, educator, and school culture—including, as appropriate, insights from individual and/or group reflection regarding identities, assumptions, and systemic biases within the school context—influenced the group’s choice of focus and are being addressed through the professional learning process.

**Note: Synthesize the data used to define the student priority academic area and the focus that your group selected. Do not present tables of information without interpretation and conclusions about the focus used for this task. Rather, use tables of data judiciously to guide and inform readers.**

- A description of the group selected for this task that includes a list of the members (by role, not by name) and the reasons for the inclusion of each, including how the selected educators reflect multiple perspectives.
- Placement of the group within the school context, including the following information:
  - An analysis of the role that group learning currently plays in the school’s educator and student cultures and as a part of school improvement efforts.
  - Identification of the types of groups that already exist in the school.
  - Information on formal training on professional learning communities, group building, or group process and the nature of this training.
  - An explanation of how you obtained group members’ commitment to participate, including their reasons for doing so.
  - A description of your role in facilitating the group formation and focus selection, including setting group norms and critical reflection on identities, assumptions, and systemic biases and inequities.

- A description of a culturally responsive, inclusive plan for how the group will work together, share responsibilities, manage agendas and minutes, and use protocols to facilitate inquiry and learning.

## **Artifact 2: Description of the Group-Learning Experiences and Results**

In a **report** of up to five single-spaced pages (up to 2,500 words) written by you to the principal or superintendent, provide a summary of what the group did during the course of its meetings. Specifically, include the following information:

- An explanation of how you supported the group’s work over time, including how you garnered and structured time and resources to support the group’s work. Include the following information:
  - How you secured and scheduled meeting time.
  - How you secured staff support to enable group work.
  - How you secured other resources to support group work and/or pilot evidence-based, culturally responsive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, identity-affirming, and anti-racist educator practices.
  - How you differentiated support for educators over time.
- An explanation of how you engaged educators in a group-learning process that enabled them to change their own educator practice in a manner that will positively influence equitable student learning and outcomes in the identified student **priority academic area**. Include the following elements:
  - A justification of how the selected evidence-based adult learning approach(es) supported group learning.
  - An explanation of how the approach will facilitate changes in practices for the focus area and lead to increased equity and improved student outcomes in the student **priority academic area**.
  - An explanation of how the group-learning approach is situated within the school’s professional learning culture, history, and context.
- A description of the inclusive, culturally responsive group-learning norms that group members created and sustained to support their work together.
- A brief explanation of the nature of the group’s learning and how the learning was structured that includes the following:
  - The schedule of meetings and a summary of the steps the group took to conduct its work.

- A description of how protocols, group-learning norms, and/or other resources were used to support group learning during and between meetings.
- A description of your role in facilitating an equitable, inclusive group process that honored group members' strengths, challenges, and perspectives and how group members shared responsibilities.
- A description of how you monitored the effectiveness of the group's exploration, identification, and implementation of a new or improved educator practice.
- A description of how you supported the collective work of the group, including ongoing group reflection activities.
- Evidence of what the educators have learned individually and collectively and how it connects to the focus area.
- A description of how you supported individuals within the group over time and the different types of support offered. Include the following:
  - What different or additional supports individual group members needed and why.
  - How you differentiated support for individual group members over time.
  - How successful you were in differentiating support for individual group members while honoring their backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges.
- A summary of the work that the group did to foster learning in the focus area and of the group's experiences in supporting one another's learning, including:
  - A review of the group members' exploration of evidence-based, culturally responsive, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and anti-racist educator practices.
  - The ideas and resources discussed during regular meetings and the learning activities.
  - A description of new and/or improved educator practices educators tried out between meetings.
  - A description of how the work relates to the focus within the student **priority academic area** and has been relevant for group members.
- A description of any member differences, conflicts, and/or other challenges that arose and how you and the group resolved them, including steps you took to reinforce group-learning norms and principles of equity and inclusion.

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

In a **memo** of up to three single-spaced pages (up to 1,500 words) written by you to the principal or superintendent, provide an analysis of the group members' feedback on group learning, group task accomplishment(s), the group's receptivity to collaborative professional inquiry and critical reflection, and your facilitation role. Also provide evidence of the benefits of the work for improving educator practice, access to learning, and student outcomes. Specifically, include the following information:

- A summary identifying which group members (by role, not by name) provided feedback and briefly describing how you obtained feedback.
- An analysis and interpretation of group or group members' feedback that you collected about the following aspects of the task:
  - Their experiences learning together as a group over time.
  - Your group facilitation and support skills, including your effectiveness in employing inclusive strategies that honor each group member's strengths and challenges.
  - How differentiated feedback is connected to the student **priority academic area**.
  - The group's accomplishments, challenges, and implications for group members' educator practices, including how members' practices changed as a result of the group's work.
  - What group members learned from individual and group reflection and how members developed their capacity for critical reflection.
  - How group member disagreements or conflicts were addressed and how members learned to work to resolve differences.
  - Group members' perceptions of the potential for sustaining the group, as well as the group's receptivity for collaborative professional inquiry generally and changes in educator practice.
- An analysis of the evidence you collected related to the following aspects of the group's work:
  - Evidence of what group members learned individually and collectively.
  - How the work addressed the selected focus within the student **priority academic area**, and what group members explored, tried out, and learned individually and collectively.
  - Preliminary evidence of how group members' work is impacting student



access to learning and outcomes in the student **priority academic area**.

- Recommendations for sustaining the group or the use of groups to foster a professional learning culture in the school, confront barriers to student learning, and improve student outcomes.

**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**

First, you must complete the Confidentiality and Anonymity Form for each task and upload it as you submit your work products for Task 2. An editable version is available within the ePortfolio system. Candidates are required to complete and upload this form for each task.

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, submit the following documents used in the task using a separate file for each of these six categories:

- Category 1: Background data and other information that define the **priority academic area** and focus selected.
- Category 2: A list of educator and/or staff groups existing in the school.
- Category 3: A list of the group-building and discussion group protocols you used to facilitate your group.
- Category 4: The agendas and minutes for all the group meetings.
- Category 5: Other materials that are relevant to the work that the group undertook, such as references for readings used in group meetings or samples of student work that were examined.
- Category 6: The group-learning feedback form and summary findings.

## **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,” the group reflection activities in “Component 2: Plan” and “Component 3: Act,” 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 through this experience. Avoid simply recapping the steps you took to complete the task and focus on the analysis of your leadership for improving your own group-building and group-learning facilitation skills for the future. Base your analysis on the activities as well as on the feedback received from group members about your leadership and how it influenced their professional learning. Including your own learning about your leadership and ability to foster group learning is critical.

The commentary should not be a description of all of the actions you took to complete the task or a reiteration of the work accomplished, which has been covered in other artifacts and documents. Rather, identify and describe the leadership skills you used during the course of the Task 2 project. Where applicable, provide examples of these leadership skills in action. Be sure to reflect on the leadership skills you used and describe how your leadership skills developed or changed during the course of the Task 2 project.

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

- What leadership skills did you use to build a professional learning community? What particular lessons did you learn that shaped your leadership approach?
- How did critical reflection—both your own reflection and your facilitation of group reflection activities—affect your understanding of the assumptions, implicit biases, and systemic inequities that can impede student learning? How did critical reflection affect your leadership practice?
- Describe any adjustments you made to your leadership practices throughout the task. How did your leadership skills change over time? Describe any adjustments you will make to your leadership practices in the future.
- How did you support the group in exploring evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining educator practices? In what ways did you help the group

members make progress in changing their practice for the designated focus area?

- What problems did you encounter and what successes did you achieve in facilitating group building and group learning? How did you handle conflict or group member differences? How did you enable educators to take greater responsibility in initiating their own learning and change? How did you honor the identities, strengths, and challenges of each group member and promote sustainability? What lessons have you learned to improve your ability to facilitate group learning in the future?
- What would you do differently to improve group effectiveness? Why would you take these new steps? Include specific examples of what worked well and how you would improve your leadership skills in facilitating a group-learning process for the future.
- Identify your successes and challenges as a leader in completing Task 2. Explain what you would have done differently, based on your experiences. Identify the implications for your future school leadership work, including acknowledging your strengths and areas for growth and proposing what skills and practices you need to improve to develop further as a school leader.
- What feedback did you receive from group members, school leaders, and all school community members (e.g., students, educators outside of the working group, parents/guardians, community representatives) regarding your leadership during Task 2, and how can you use this feedback to improve your leadership practices moving forward?

## Task 2 PAL Evidence Chart

This chart provides a list of all required work products for PAL Task 2, 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 2 in this handbook for detailed requirements pertaining to the intent and content requirements of each file.

PAL Task 2 Evidence Chart				
Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture				
Part	Work Product/Evidence	Specifications (if required)	# of Files	Acceptable File Types
Part A	Confidentiality and Anonymity	Template provided	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part B	Artifact 1—Description of the Priority Academic Area and the Group	Max 2 single-spaced pages (no more than 1,000 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part C	Artifact 2—Description of the Group-Learning Experiences and Results	Max 5 single-spaced pages (no more than 2,500 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf

<p align="center"><b>PAL Task 2 Evidence Chart</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture</b></p>				
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) Background Data 2) Teacher List 3) Protocols 4) Agenda and Minutes 5) Other Materials 6) Feedback and Summary	Separate file(s) for each of these 6 file categories	6	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
Part F	Commentary	Max 2 single-spaced pages (no more than 1,000 words)	1	.doc; .docx; .odt; .pdf
<p>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.</p>				

**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 Submission Requirements, you will need to take the operational version of Task 2.

## 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 2 Evidence Chart located in the Task 2 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-, and student-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 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 collect feedback on the candidate's leadership of the group.

■ Proofread all documents?

Candidates are to proofread all documents before uploading to:

- Remove all names of the **candidate, school, district, and staff and student-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 PAL 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 stakeholders.

- 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 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture through Professional Learning Groups 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 2.a: Plan to Facilitate Group Learning

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 plan for a professional learning culture to improve instructional practice and student learning?**

The primary source of evidence for Rubric 2.a is Artifact 1.

In addition to this primary source, 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>2.a.1: Group identification and group formation</b>	<p>Identifies two or more educators with whom to work.</p> <p>Informally forms a group, only for information sharing.</p>	<p>Selects two or more educators whose work is related to the priority academic area and who represent multiple perspectives.</p> <p>Forms the group for information sharing and professional learning.</p> <p>Develops a weak commitment among the group members to try out new instructional practices.</p>	<p>Selects two or more educators who represent multiple perspectives for a professional learning group with an interest in improving instructional practices in the priority academic area.</p> <p>Forms the group for professional learning with a clearly defined facilitation role.</p> <p>Develops a moderate commitment among the group members to try out</p>	<p>With school and leader input, engages two or more educators who represent multiple perspectives for a professional learning group, based on their individual and collective strengths clearly connected to the priority academic area and focus.</p> <p>Forms the group for professional learning with a clearly defined facilitation role and expectations for shared leadership.</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)
			new instructional practices to improve student learning outcomes.	Develops a strong commitment among the group members to support each other in trying out new instructional educator practices to increase access to learning and improve student outcomes.
<b>2.a.2: Group-learning plan</b>	<p>Does not identify a priority academic area or does not link a focus to student performance data.</p> <p>Provides limited information on school context for group learning.</p> <p>States an aim for group learning.</p> <p>Does not propose a plan for group learning or has a plan that has few or no strategies to support group learning.</p>	<p>Generally defines a priority academic area with limited use of student performance data and information on the school context and culture.</p> <p>Provides an aim to improving educators’ instructional practice and a general plan for group learning.</p> <p>Includes some attention to strategies to support group learning in the proposed plan, with some consideration of systemic barriers affecting student learning.</p>	<p>Identifies a priority academic area that reflects student performance data for one or more student groups.</p> <p>Uses data to explain how the priority academic area and focus for improving educators’ instructional practice is influenced by school context and culture.</p> <p>Provides a goal and objectives for group learning based on the focus for the priority academic area, including a consideration of systemic barriers affecting student learning.</p> <p>Provides a plan with structure and process for group learning.</p>	<p>Identifies a priority academic area and focus that explicitly links to student performance data for one or more student groups.</p> <p>Uses data to explain how the priority academic area and focus for improving educators’ instructional practice is influenced by school context and culture.</p> <p>Provides a goal and measurable objectives for group learning that addresses the focus for the priority academic area, including a consideration of systemic barriers to student learning.</p> <p>Has an evidence-based plan for group learning and a professional learning culture, with strategies, structure, and process that respect the identities,</p>

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				strengths, and needs of group members.  Links plan to school-level conditions, existing resources, school culture, broader school improvement strategies, and the group’s understanding of systemic obstacles within the school context.

## Rubric 2.b: Enact a Professional Learning Culture to Support Team Learning

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 support group learning?

The primary sources of evidence for Rubric 2.b are Artifact 2, 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>2.b.1: Group process</b>	<p>Does little to facilitate group learning. Is a member of the group; facilitator role is unclear.</p> <p>Does not help the group create and use learning norms.</p> <p>Does not hold group meetings over time.</p>	<p>Facilitates the group with limited evidence on how the facilitation engages group learning or individual learning.</p> <p>Establishes general group-learning norms.</p> <p>Holds group meetings over a short time period, without sufficient time for a full inquiry cycle.</p>	<p>Consistently facilitates group learning related to the focus area. Has a clear role as the group’s facilitator or organizer.</p> <p>Establishes and uses inclusive, culturally responsive shared norms for working and decision-making.</p> <p>Uses culturally relevant and sustaining protocols or structured group-learning processes with the group to facilitate group learning.</p> <p>Provides support for</p>	<p>Consistently facilitates group learning in the focus area and has a clear role as the group organizer and facilitator. Enables shared responsibility for facilitating group learning.</p> <p>Establishes and uses inclusive, culturally responsive shared norms for problem solving, resolving conflicts, monitoring, and eliciting feedback.</p> <p>Uses culturally relevant and sustaining protocols or</p>

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			<p>individual educators to facilitate learning.</p> <p>Holds group meetings over time with sufficient time for a full inquiry cycle.</p>	<p>structured group-learning processes and individual educator support strategies to facilitate learning in ways that respect the strengths and challenges of group members.</p> <p>Holds group meetings over time with sufficient time for more than a full inquiry cycle.</p> <p>Differentiates support for individual educators within the group and one-on-one.</p>
<b>2.b.2: Group learning and work</b>	<p>Unsystematically shares information with others about practices.</p> <p>Identifies generally what the educators learn individually and/or collectively.</p> <p>Provides at least some claims about how the educators’ learning connects to the focus.</p>	<p>Directs educators with limited information and support for individual and collective work.</p> <p>Describes in some detail what the educators learn individually and/or collectively.</p> <p>Provides evidence on how the educators’ learning connects to the focus.</p>	<p>Supports educators’ ongoing individual and collective work.</p> <p>Employs different strategies, meetings, and other interventions to meet the diverse needs of each group member.</p> <p>Provides clear evidence on what the educators have learned as a collaborative group, including explorations of evidence-based, culturally relevant, and sustaining educator practices and how this learning connects to the focus area.</p>	<p>Promotes and deepens educators’ ongoing individual and collective work through cycles of preparing, acting, monitoring, assessing, and sharing.</p> <p>Enables educators to share and reflect on their individual learning experiences with the group.</p> <p>Provides evidence on what the educators learn individually and collectively through the group-learning process, including exploration of evidence-based, culturally relevant, and sustaining educator</p>

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				practices; the evidence is differentiated by educator need or interest and is connected to the focus.

## Rubric 2.c: Assess Team Learning to Improve Ongoing Group Learning

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 assess progress and change pertaining to a group-learning task?

The primary sources of evidence for Rubric 2.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.

	Beginning (1.00 to 2.09)	Developing (2.10 to 2.74)	Meeting (2.75 to 3.49)	Exceeding (3.50 to 4.00)
<b>2.c.1: Assessment of group process and group work</b>	Describes own learning accomplishments, with limited attention to others' learning experiences.	Describes what group members tried out and/or what occurred in the group process, and the task accomplishments, drawing on group member feedback. Makes weak or no links between group process and group accomplishments.	Uses group member feedback and other data on how the group process facilitates the group's learning and task accomplishments (individually and collectively).	Uses analysis of group member feedback, documentation of practice, and other evidence to show how group learning and task accomplishments (individually and collectively) led to changes in educator practices. Provides evidence that the group developed capacity as an ongoing learning community. Draws on theory, research, and best practices in leadership development, professional group building, and learning.



<p><b>2.c.2: Assessment of leadership skills and practices</b></p>	<p>Discusses leadership in general, if at all, but not relative to this task. Does not evaluate relevant leadership skills.</p>	<p>Conducts only a general analysis of some leadership skills and practices used in completing this task, without drawing on specific experiences.</p> <p>Recaps the steps taken in completing the task with little evaluation of their own leadership skills.</p>	<p>Draws on specific learning experiences to evaluate their leadership skills and practices relevant to this task.</p> <p>Reflects on how systemic biases and inequities as well as their own implicit biases affected their leadership practice.</p> <p>Identifies what worked well and what they could have done differently.</p> <p>Identifies changes that could be made to improve their leadership skills in the future.</p>	<p>Drawing on specific learning experiences, describes and evaluates the relevant leadership skills and practices used to complete the task.</p> <p>Describes how critical reflection on systemic biases and inequities as well as their own implicit biases affected their leadership practice and how they adjusted leadership practices throughout the task, providing specific examples.</p> <p>Solicits and analyzes feedback on their leadership skills from educators involved in this task and utilizes this feedback to help identify what worked well and what they could have done differently.</p> <p>Proposes specific steps to improve their practice.</p>
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# 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.