

Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL):

Toolkit for SCHOOL LEADER Mentors

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**What is PAL?**

The Massachusetts [Performance Assessment](http://ma-pal.com/) for Leaders (PAL) is a performance-based assessment system to evaluate the readiness of school leadership candidates for initial licensure in the Commonwealth. This new system will enable principal candidates to demonstrate their leadership knowledge and skills based on actual experiences within their [schools](http://ma-pal.com/) as part of a preparation pathway. This performance assessment is comprised of four tasks to be completed and submitted by the candidate in order to receive certification toward a Massachusetts administrator license.

**Purpose of this Toolkit:**

Thank you for agreeing to mentor an administrative leader candidate. Your role will be vital not only to the candidate’s learning experience, but will also help shape the success and growth as he/she continues throughout a career. In general, we will refer you to the [*Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Preparation Programs*,](http://ma-pal.com/) as well as all of the resources made available to you from the [PAL website](http://ma-pal.com/); however, this Toolkit will serve as guidance of where to look in the [*Field Guide*](http://ma-pal.com/), as well as provide some brief overviews about the assessment and how it will look in your school during participation.

**How to Use this Toolkit:**

This Toolkit will target information for a school leader and his/her staff and provide the following:

* General Expectations for School Leaders and School Staff Page 2
* Task-specific Expectations for School Leaders and School Staff Page 3
* Descriptions of PAL by Task:
  + Task 1 Page 5
  + Task 2 Page 7
  + Task 3 Page 9
  + Task 4 Page 11
* Common Concerns and Strategies for Effective Implementation Page 13
* Resources Page 14

**General Expectations**

**School Leader Mentors**

A school leader is a crucial part of the principal candidate’s experience, and therefore support is imperative for successfully completing the PAL. The candidate should expect the following from his/her mentoring school leader:

* Develop a collaborative plan for the mentorship, documentation and leadership development
* Communication to school staff of the candidate’s role and the overview of the four tasks
* Conduct initial meeting with the candidate to share the school’s vision, discuss expectations of the candidate, review norms of the building, etc
* Introduce candidates to all functional areas of a school, providing them with opportunities to observe how experienced administrators address challenges within the school
* Provide necessary school data
* Assist with recruiting faculty volunteers for implementing improvement plans, committees, and evaluation cycle experiences
* Establish recurring meetings, check-ins with candidate
* Provide feedback
* Encourage candidate to reflect on successes and challenges of their development as leaders

**School Staff**

Another essential component of a candidate’s success is staff involvement. For the submission of all PAL products, all confidentiality of school and individual names are preserved. A candidate will expect staff members to:

* Volunteer to participate in small groups to support school improvement plans
* Welcome the candidate into your classroom for informal observations and visits
* Participate in surveys from the candidate
* Assist in identifying students to participate in feedback surveys
* Volunteer to participate in a formal evaluation with videotaping
* Volunteer to work collaboratively with a small group of staff and community members to contribute to the school improvement plan

Task-specific Expectations for School Leaders and School Staff

The following table outlines expectations for school leaders and staff members by task:

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| **Task Description**  **& Objectives** | | **Expectations for Mentoring Administrator** | **Expectations for School Staff** |
| **Task 1** | **Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement.**  The candidate will collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on student performance, student and teacher relationships and school culture, select a priority area for focus, document existing school programs, services, and practices, and develop a set of goals, objectives, and action strategies. | * Provide necessary quantitative data to the candidate including any student, teacher, school, and district information needed; encourage staff to allow classroom visits, interviews, surveys, etc. for the candidate’s collection of qualitative data. | * Support provision of both qualitative and quantitative data to the candidate, including aggregate data on student assessment scores, observations in and around the school, classroom visits, informal interviews, and focus groups or surveys with students, teachers, and other representative stakeholders. |
| **Task 2** | **Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture.** The candidate will demonstrate their capacity to foster a professional learning culture to improve student learning by working with a small group of teachers using structured learning activities to improve the teachers’ knowledge and skills. The candidate will support teachers in improving an existing curriculum, instruction, or assessment strategy, while documenting the process, teachers’ team work and improved practices. | * Assist in the facilitation of creating a group of volunteer teachers by encouraging staff participation, and providing recommendations of specific staff members to contact. | * The candidate will need to identify teachers to be members of a professional learning group related to the student learning priority area and provide a rationale for their inclusion. Members of school staff will be asked to consider participation in this group. |
| **Task Description**  **& Objectives** | **Expectations for Mentoring Administrator** | **Expectations for School Staff** |
| **Task 3** | **Leadership in Observing, Assessing, and Supporting Individual Teacher Effectiveness.** The candidate is to demonstrate instructional leadership skills to plan for a teacher observation, observe, analyze observation and student data, provide feedback and plan support for an individual teacher. A candidate will document his or her work in the observation cycle and teacher feedback on the quality and use of the feedback. | * Discuss the school/district-specific evaluation cycle process, providing any resources necessary for evaluating educators; assist in the recruitment of a volunteer teacher to evaluate; monitor process, assess progress, and provide feedback. | * The candidate will complete an evaluation cycle with a volunteer teacher, as well as observe several other teachers within the same content area. Members of school staff will be asked to consider volunteering to be evaluated by candidate, with school leader oversight. |
| **Task 4** | **Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement.** A candidate will develop a proposal and implement one component to improve family engagement and community involvement in a school’s priority area that is related to student achievement or student health, recreation or social needs that impact their learning. A candidate will work collaboratively with a work group representing school leadership, staff, families and community members, and students to select a priority area based on evidence on student needs, gather information related to family engagement and community involvement needs, develop a proposal and implement one component with work group support. | * Provide information related to family engagement and community involvement needs, and assist in implementing an improvement plan. To do this, the mentor should encourage staff, family, and community members to participate, and provide necessary supports to group meetings and objectives. | * Candidates will create a small work group of staff, family, and community members that represents diverse interests pertaining to the priority area, and clarify the group’s purpose, relevance to the priority area, and composition. Members of the staff as well as community will volunteer for participation in this group to meet regularly, in convenient times and locations, for planning and implementation support. |

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

**General Overview**

The candidate will collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on student performance, student and teacher relationships and school culture, select a priority area for focus, document existing school programs, services, and practices, and develop a set of goals, objectives, and action strategies. For more information, please see pages 10 – 28 in [the *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook.*](http://ma-pal.com/)

**Suggested Resources to Make Available to the Candidate**

* Three to five years of quantitative student performance indicators, qualitative indicators of school culture and student learning, and school context information on the school as a whole.
* Identified priority academic areas of interest where improved student performance is desired, if available.
* Any documentation of existing school programs, services, and practices that are relevant to the priority area and ascertain the gaps and opportunities for improvement.

**When Does This Task Take Place?**

It is recommended that Task 1 be completed first, to enable candidates to investigate a priority area for work on the remaining three tasks.  The ultimate decision, however, of when to submit a completed task is up to the candidate. The tasks are designed to be completed throughout a candidate’s program experience. When and how they are to be integrated into the candidates’ program experience is up to the program and the candidate.   All assessment task products, however, should be completed by the end of the program or soon thereafter in order to apply for licensure.

**Key Conditions to Make a Candidate Successful**

* Establish a common vision. The principal and candidate must work collaboratively to develop an improvement plan for one school-based priority area so that there is not a conflict between vision, required resources, etc.
* Involve and/or familiarize the candidate with the development and implementation of the school improvement plan
* Provide candidates with access to the data needed
* Facilitate ways in which the candidate can gather input from other school leaders and stakeholders by encouraging staff members to become involved
* Hold regularly scheduled meetings with the candidate to discuss progress, needs of the candidate, and provide and solicit feedback.

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| **How will a candidate’s successful completion of this task strengthen my school?** |
| 1. Candidates will provide feedback and strategies for implementing a vision of high quality student achievement and a plan for improving student learning in a priority area within the school. This plan will be based on relevant school and community data and input from students, teachers, staff, and families. It will be based on considering the strengths and challenges of existing programs and practices in the school and the potential of other strategies. 2. The school will receive a compelling, evidence-based argument about how the proposed strategies will improve learning for the targeted students in the priority area. |

#### Task 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture

**General Overview**

The candidate will demonstrate their capacity to foster a professional learning culture to improve student learning by working with a small group of teachers using structured learning activities to improve the teachers’ knowledge and skills. The candidate will support teachers in improving an existing curriculum, instruction, or assessment strategy, while documenting the process, teachers’ team work and improved practices. For more information, please see pages 29 – 43 in [the *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook.*](http://ma-pal.com/)

**Suggested Resources to Make Available to the Candidate**

* Documentation of relevant school context information, including school and district goals and vision, and policies that support professional learning.
* Any relevant information on the school context, goals, and policies, particularly as related to professional learning.
* An overview of the teacher teams in the school.
* Assisting in identifying a priority academic area for improvement.

**When Does This Take Place?**

The tasks are designed to be completed throughout a candidate’s program experience. When and how they are to be integrated into the candidates’ program experience is up to the program and the candidate.   All assessment task products, however, should be completed by the end of the program or soon thereafter in order to apply for licensure.

**Key Conditions to Make a Candidate Successful**

* Facilitate partnerships with key curriculum and instructional leaders, such as department heads, instructional coaches, and grade level leaders.
* Support identification or recruitment of a group of teachers to engage in team learning over two to three months or longer.
* Enable meeting times for the team.
* Support collection of information through interviews, observations, or surveys on the implementation of team learning activity and the new or improved practices that the teachers try out.
* Provide feedback on the strategies and other work of the candidate and the team.

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| **How will a candidate’s successful completion of this task strengthen my school?** |
| 1. When a PAL candidate completes this task, the school will benefit from his or her recommendations for further use of teams or groups to foster a professional learning culture in the school to improve student learning. 2. The candidate will provide an analysis of the group members’ feedback on team learning and evidence of the benefits of the work for improving teaching practice and student learning. |

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

**General Overview**

The candidate is to demonstrate instructional leadership skills to plan for a teacher observation, observe, analyze observation and student data, provide feedback and plan support for an individual teacher. A candidate will document his or her work in the observation cycle and teacher feedback on the quality and use of the feedback. For more information, please see pages 44 – 63 in the [*PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook.*](http://ma-pal.com/)

**Suggested Resources to Make Available to the Candidate**

* Assistance in the selection of a teacher to serve as a volunteer to participate in an observation and evaluation cycle.
* District protocol for teacher observation and evaluation.
* District, school, and teacher team priorities pertaining to an identified content and instructional focus within a student learning priority area.

**When Does This Take Place?**

The tasks are designed to be completed throughout a candidate’s program experience. When and how they are to be integrated into the candidates’ program experience is up to the program and the candidate.   All assessment task products, however, should be completed by the end of the program or soon thereafter in order to apply for licensure.

**Key Conditions to Make a Candidate Successful**

* Provide information on school and district policies and practices for teacher observation and feedback.
* Help to identify an instructional focus and a teacher volunteer.
* Support visitations to three or more similar classes and review of student work.
* Provide the opportunity to conduct a pre-observation, observation, and post-observation meeting with the teacher.
* Provide guidance on permission to videotape the teacher observation and post-observation meeting.
* Provide guidance in developing appropriate feedback and teacher support.

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| **How will a candidate’s successful completion of this task strengthen my school?** |
| 1. The school’s leadership will gain knowledge of their teacher’s strengths and areas for improvement. 2. The teacher who was observed by the PAL candidate will receive thoughtful, mindful feedback of the observed teaching using the school/district teacher observation protocol. Feedback will address issues in the identified priority area and focus of the school. |

#### Task 4: Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement

**General Overview**

A candidate will develop a proposal and implement one component to improve family engagement and community involvement in a school’s priority area that is related to student achievement or student health, recreation or social needs that impact their learning. A candidate will work collaboratively with a work group representing school leadership, staff, families and community members, and students to select a priority area based on evidence on student needs, gather information related to family engagement and community involvement needs, develop a proposal and implement one component with work group support. For more information, please see pages 64 – 75 in the [*PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook*](http://ma-pal.com/)*.*

**Suggested Resources to Make Available to the Candidate**

* Identified priority areas based on student performance evidence (and on student differences), or on student health and social needs that impact student learning, if available.
* Any relevant information on family and community involvement with the school, specifically pertaining to school improvement.
* Any documentation of existing school programs, services, and practices that are relevant to the priority area and ascertain the gaps and opportunities for improvement.

**When Does This Take Place?**

The tasks are designed to be completed throughout a candidate’s program experience. When and how they are to be integrated into the candidates’ program experience is up to the program and the candidate.   All assessment task products, however, should be completed by the end of the program or soon thereafter in order to apply for licensure.

**Key Conditions to Make a Candidate Successful**

* Provide support in reviewing school data and selecting a priority area.
* Recommend various stakeholder representatives (staff, family members, and community representatives) for a work group.
* Support meeting logistics.
* Enable the gathering of school and community information and documentation on related policies, strategies, and programs.
* Provide feedback on a comprehensive proposal for improving family engagement and community involvement in a priority area.
* Support implementation of one proposed strategy.

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| **How will a candidate’s successful completion of this task strengthen my school?** |
| 1. This task is to strengthen family engagement and community involvement for a school’s identified priority area. 2. As part of this task, candidates work collaboratively with school leaders, staff, families, and community representatives to align their work to a student learning or student health or social need priority, which mutually benefits both individuals involved as well as the school as a whole. |

**Resources**

**Common Concerns and Strategies for Effective Implementation**

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| **Common Concerns** | **Strategies for Effective Implementation** |
| Ensuring data confidentiality | *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook:* pages 63, 81  *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* pages 7, 19 |
| Lack of knowledge/experience in mentoring principal candidates | [Videos on ma-pal.com](http://ma-pal.com/) |
| Candidate’s “fit” with school culture/mission | *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* pages 10, 29, 44, and 64 |
| Candidate’s readiness to assume an administrative position | *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook:* pages 21, 39, 55, and 75 |
| Candidate knowledge and understanding of the requirements | *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* pages 10, 29, 44, and 64 |
| Basis of rubrics and evaluation of the candidate | [**Professional Standards for Administrators**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edleadership/standards.html)  *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook:* pages 21, 39, 55, and 75  *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* page 35 |
| Commitment of time for involved staff and mentoring principal | *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* pages 10, 29, 44, and 64 |

**Additional Resources for Mentoring School Leaders**

* To understand more about confidentiality guidelines and issues of privacy, please refer to the following handbooks:
  + *PAL Candidates Assessment Handbook:* pages 63, 81
  + *Administrative Field Guide for Leadership Programs:* pages 7, 19
* To access model district consent forms, please go to <http://ma-pal.com/candidates/resources/>To learn more about PAL and access resources for candidates and scorers, please visit <http://ma-pal.com/candidates/overview>
* For information to help candidates when submitting the tasks, please visit <https://app.showevidence.com>
* For any information, support, questions, comments and concerns, please visit <http://ma-pal.com/contact-us/>
* For FAQs , please refer to <http://ma-pal.com/candidates/faqs/>
* For schedules and timelines, please visit
* [http://ma-pal.com/candidates/schedule/](  http://ma-pal.com/candidates/schedule/)