Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (MA-PAL)

**Background and Development Timeline:**
In 2011, the Department began work with partner Bank Street College of Education, their team of national leadership and performance assessment experts, as well as multiple representatives from the preparation pathways and K-12 schools and districts, to design and develop a performance-based assessment system as one component of principal preparation and licensure in Massachusetts. Unlike standard paper and pencil tests, the Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (MA-PAL) includes performance assessment tasks that more closely reflect the authentic work of school leaders. Accomplishing this objective required design work, and the pilot and field testing of the assessment tasks, which included working together with key stakeholders.

Development Timeline:
- Year 1 (2012-13): Design and develop assessment tasks and vet with stakeholder groups
- Year 2 (2013-14): Pilot test assessment tasks with principal candidates
- Year 3 (2014-15): Field Trial assessment system statewide for all principal licensure candidates
  - The purpose of the field trial was to assess the validity and reliability of all four performance assessment tasks and the assessment system overall as a means of evaluating candidate readiness for principal licensure. The deadline for all candidates enrolled in the field trial to submit all the tasks just ended on May 15, 2015. All tasks submitted after May 15, 2015 will be scored and evaluated for the purposes of licensure using the established cut scores beginning in fall 2015.
- Year 4 (Fall 2015): Begin full implementation

MA-PAL is designed as a performance measure in which candidates can demonstrate and apply their leadership knowledge and skills by setting direction, creating a professional learning culture among staff, supporting individual teacher development, and engaging families and community in improving student learning.

**Purpose of MA-PAL:**
The Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (MA-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 as part of a preparation pathway.

**Summary of MA-PAL Tasks:**
- **Task 1: Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement**
  Focusing on the two pillars of highly effective schools—the instructional program (curriculum, instruction and assessment) and school culture, a candidate will develop a school vision and improvement plan for one school-based priority area. 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 with input from school leaders and key stakeholder groups.
• **Task 2: Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture**
A 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.

• **Task 3: Leadership in Observing, Assessing, and Supporting Individual Teacher Effectiveness**
A 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.

• **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.

**MA -PAL Implementation Timeline:**
Beginning September 1, 2014, all principal/assistant principal licensure candidates were required to complete all four performance assessment tasks as part of the field trial that ended on May 15, 2015.

Following the end of the field trial, all submitted work will be required to meet cut scores. These cut scores will be determined and released in the fall 2015. ESE will continue working with stakeholders to build resources to support implementation.

**For More Information:**
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