Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL)

Technical Report Follow-Up

Summary of Feedback and Performance Studies for 2015-6 Program Year of PAL

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# Executive Summary

About PAL Completers. Two hundred and twenty candidates completed PAL in 2015-16, including 67 who started during the Field Trial and 153 who completed all four tasks only in 2015-16 (referred to here as PAL completers). This latter number is 24% of those who completed all four tasks during the two-year period of the Field Trial and Program Year. As during the Field Trial, the 21015-16 PAL completers were primarily female and enrolled in or had recently completed a leadership preparation program.

PAL completer feedback on the assessment experience. Most PAL completers in 2015-16, like the 2014-15 completers, agreed that the PAL assessment requirements, work and scoring were understandable, relevant to school leadership work, and feasible to complete. This agreement was highest for Task 3 (observation and feedback) and lowest for Task 1 (school improvement planning). About half the completers reported that completing each task took 60 hours or less, the number of hours estimated for task completion. Task 3 took the least time and Task 2 the most, on average.

PAL completer feedback on each task. Most PAL completers agreed that the four PAL tasks were somewhat challenging, with only a small or modest percentage agreeing that any specific task step was too challenging or not very challenging. This suggests that the tasks were appropriately challenging as performance assessments. While a few did not describe the tasks as positive educative experiences, the most PAL completers described them positively, writing about what was most valuable in completing each task and how each task fostered deep learning. Many PAL completers also described how task completion lead to positive school changes in ways pertaining to the task, such as planning and teacher development and, for some, the addition of new programs or changes in teacher practice.

Leadership preparation programs and PAL. PAL completers from leadership preparation programs and program faculty provided survey feedback on how well preparation programs supported candidates to complete PAL. Responding program faculty strongly agreed that they understood the tasks (although slightly less for the rubrics), that the tasks were relevant to the work of school leaders and were feasible for candidates to perform, and that their program content was well aligned. Most agreed that their program was effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete the steps for the four tasks (although slightly less so for data analysis and priority setting). In contrast to those that did not complete all the tasks, PAL completers were much more likely to agree that their preparation was well aligned and that their program was effective in supporting them to complete the task steps (this difference may reflect timing of candidates’ preparation and faculty feedback on program alignment). When asked about program changes as a result of PAL, program faculty cited few challenges or negative consequences and often pointed to positive effects: No effect on candidate recruitment; modest changes in curriculum content to sequence and align better; some changes in assessments; some changes in field work; and positive outcomes for candidate career advancement.

PAL performance assessment results (2015-16). Scores in 2015-16 were higher than 2014-15 scores for three of the four tasks and the score range narrower. Most completers (88%) achieved passing composite PAL scores for 2015-16. PAL completers from preparation programs scored higher than other completers on three of the four tasks, suggesting preparation benefits. Most task scores have modest, positive correlations, confirming both their measure independence and construct relationship.

Conclusion. PAL task assessment evidence continues to support the use of PAL assessments as a requirement to determine candidate readiness for initial school leader licensure. Candidates’ experiences demonstrate that the tasks meet the performance assessment purposes of being authentic, challenging, educative, and relevant to their school settings. The assessment requirements are found to be well aligned to preparation programs and lead to modest curriculum and field work changes, with little negative consequence.

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# Introduction

This report presents the results for the first Program Year implementation of the Massachusetts Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL), following its Field Trial in 2014-15 and standard setting process in November 2015. For implementation, DESE made two policy changes which might have bearing on candidate participation and candidate score performance: implementing a candidate fee ($500 for initial PAL enrollment and $125 for each task a candidate had to retake) and requiring candidates to achieve threshold performance scores on each task (2.1 on a 4-point scale) and a total passing score based of at least 2.5 average score for the four tasks. In addition, DESE and its contractor, Bank Street College added several improvements to the task instructions and rubrics to add clarity and improve scoring differentiation of candidate performance.

This report combines three sources of information about the Program Year experience: survey feedback from PAL candidates who completed all four tasks (PAL Completers) during the Program Year only, survey feedback from program directors whose candidates participated in PAL, and PAL score results for PAL completers. Where possible, the Program Year results are compared with the Field Trial results (Orr, Pecheone, Shear, Hollingworth, & Beaudin, 2016) to identify areas of improvement and consideration for further investigation.

## About PAL Completers

In Program Year 2015-16, 220 candidates completed PAL, including 67 who had finished part of PAL during the Field Trial period and 153 completed all four tasks during the Program Year, as shown in Table 1. This latter number represents 24% of those who completed all four PAL tasks during the two-year period.

Table 1

*Number of PAL completers for the Field Trial or Program Year and Percentage Distribution for the Two Year Period*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | % |
| Field Trial completers (2014-15) | 422 | 66% |
| Program Year (2015-16) | 220 | 34 |
| 1. Field trial/program year completers (2014-16) | 67 | 10 |
| 1. Program Year completers | 153 | 24 |
| Total | 642 | 100 |

At the end of the Program Year, in June and July 2016, the 153 candidates who completed all four tasks during Program Year only (referred to here as PAL completers) were emailed an on-line feedback survey to complete. Of these, 51 responded, representing 33% of all PAL completers. Of these survey respondents, 75% were female and 78% were enrolled in or had recently finished a leadership preparation program, as shown in Table 2. Most plan to become a principal, the majority of whom report as soon as possible, as shown in Table 3. These results were similar to the candidate demographics reported in the Field Trial feedback survey. There was a difference, however, in the proportion who were prepared through a university-based preparation program or one sponsored by a consortium or association: with Program Year respondents far less likely than Field Trial respondents to have been from a university-based program. Thus, we conclude that these current respondents are fairly similar to those who responded last year.

Table 2

*Percentage of Program Year (2015-16) and Field Trial (2014-15) Survey Respondents by Gender and Preparation Program or Pathway*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Program status | Program Year 2015-16 %  (n-51) | Field Trial 2014-15 %  (n=92) |
| Total | 100% | 100% |
| Gender |  |  |
| Female | 75 | 76 |
| Male | 25 | 24 |
|  |  |  |
| Program status |  |  |
| Enrolled in or recently completed a university-based leadership preparation program | 30 | 67 |
| Enrolled in or recently completed a leadership preparation program sponsored by a professional association or educational organization | 48 | 14 |
| Am in an administrative apprenticeship/internship | 18 | 16 |
| Am seeking panel review for principal licensure | 4 | 4 |
| Other (specify) | 8 | n/a |

Table 3

*Percentage Distribution of Program Year 2015-16 PAL Survey Respondents by Principal Career Intentions*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Principal intentions | % |
| I intend to become a principal as soon as possible. | 55% |
| I think I may go into the principalship someday. | 28 |
| I am undecided about going into the principalship | 13 |
| I do not plan to go into the principalship. | 4 |
| Total | 100 |

# PAL Completer Feedback About the Assessment Experience

PAL completers (2015-16) were asked to provide feedback on the assessment attributes (as had Field Trial completers), and to report on how much time was required to complete each task and how well the task work was aligned to their leadership preparation. The results are summarized below, and where possible, compared to Field Trial candidate feedback for 2014-15 to see if changes in instructions and preparation were evident.

## Assessment attributes

The PAL completers rated how strongly they agree that the PAL assessment requirements, work and scoring were understandable, relevant to school leadership and feasible to complete. Table 4 shows the percentage of candidates who agree or strongly agree with these attributes for each task. Most candidates understand the task requirements and work entailed but somewhat less agreed that they understood the scoring, particularly for Task 1. Most agreed that the tasks were relevant to the work of school leaders and aligned to the MA standards. At least two-thirds agreed that the tasks were feasible to complete and required a reasonable amount of work. Of the four tasks, the PAL completers were most likely to agree that Task 3 was feasible and reasonable and somewhat less likely to agree that Tasks 1 and 4 were.

Table 4

*Percent of PAL Completers who agree or strongly agree that the tasks are understandable, relevant and feasible, by Task. (n=51)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Attribute | Task 1 | Task 2 | Task 3 | Task 4 |
| Understandable |  |  |  |  |
| I understand the task requirements. | 78% | 80% | 92% | 82% |
| I understand the work I must engage in to complete the task. | 82 | 84 | 96 | 86 |
| I understand the scoring criteria and standards used to evaluate the work products | 61 | 71 | 78 | 73 |
| I understand the difference between score levels for each scoring rubric. | 52 | 65 | 71 | 71 |
| Relevant |  |  |  |  |
| The task is clearly aligned to the MA standards. | 92 | 92 | 96 | 88 |
| The task provided me with authentic job related experiences. | 80 | 88 | 90 | 73 |
| The task is relevant to the work that successful school leaders must be able to do | 85 | 94 | 98 | 88 |
| Feasible |  |  |  |  |
| The task is flexible and adaptable enough to different school settings | 72 | 82 | 86 | 63 |
| It was feasible for me to complete the task within the structure of a course or internship | 67 | 76 | 83 | 65 |
| The task is aligned to the curriculum of the preparation program | 73 | 81 | 92 | 76 |
| Completing the task required a reasonable amount of work. | 65 | 72 | 82 | 67 |

While not shown here, the responding PAL completers for 2015-16 were compared to those from 2014-15. On the measures of relevance, the percentage of respondents who agreed to the three attributes (standards aligned, authentic and relevant) were higher for the 2015-16 respondents by 10 percentage points or more on most of these attributes for the four tasks, with the except of Task 4, where the percentages were fairly comparable between the two years.

In terms of feasibility, the 2015-16 respondents were more positive in comparison to the 2014-15 respondents (as found in the 2014-15 Technical Report, (Orr et al., 2016)). The current respondents were much more likely to agree that the tasks were flexible and adaptable to different school settings, by 20 percentage or more points higher than the 2014-15 respondents for Tasks 1, 2 and 3, but comparable for Task 4. They were over twice as likely to agree that the Task 1 was reasonable than had the prior year respondents and as likely to agree that Tasks 2, 3 and 4 required reasonable amounts of work.

We conclude that these more positive results are probably a consequence of improved instructions, which stream-lined the tasks and work products and improved candidate preparation and support.

## Time required

The 2015-16 PAL respondents identified the amount of time required to complete each task, as shown in Table 5. The expectation was that the tasks would require 40-60 hours of work each, with Task 3 possibly taking longer. Less than half reported that completing any task took 40 or less hours. This included 48% for Task 3, 34% for task 1, 22% for tasks 2 and 4. About half the respondents reported completing the tasks in 60 hours or less: 56% for Task 1, 44% for Task 2, 70% for Task 3, and 56% for Task 4. With the exception of Task 3, one-third of the candidates reported that each task required more than 70 hours of work to complete to requirements. Given that these tasks are increasingly embedded in coursework and internship work, it is difficult to ascertain what the time estimates encompass. Further investigation could separate out time estimates for the action of each task and the work product preparation to identify which aspects of the tasks are most time consuming.

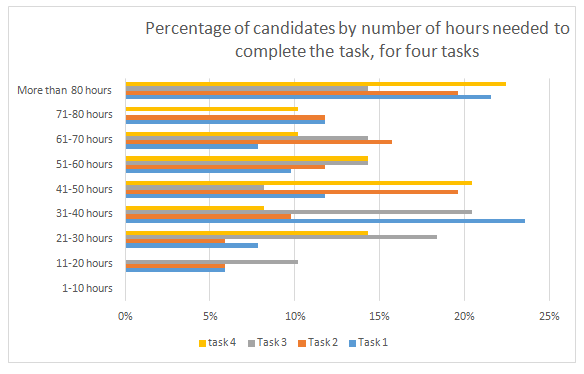
Table 5

*Percentage distribution of PAL completers by hours required to complete the tasks, by task (n=51)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Range of hours | Task 1 | Task 2 | Task 3 | task 4 |
| 30 hours or less hours | 14% | 12% | 28% | 14% |
| 31-40 hours | 24 | 10 | 20 | 8 |
| 41-50 hours | 12 | 20 | 8 | 20 |
| 51-60 hours | 10 | 12 | 14 | 14 |
| 61-70 hours | 8 | 16 | 14 | 10 |
| 71-80 hours | 12 | 12 | 0 | 10 |
| More than 80 hours | 22 | 20 | 14 | 22 |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

This contrast of time required by task is best illustrated by the following histogram.

Figure 1



# Feedback on Experiences with Each Task

PAL completers provided three kinds of feedback on each PAL task: how challenging each step was to complete the task; what was valuable and fostered deeper learning; and how the task work benefited their school or teachers who participated.

For assessment purposes, it is important that the tasks be at least somewhat challenging for most candidates to perform in most of the task-related skill areas, but not consistently very challenging. If most candidates perceive one or more steps to be very challenging, the task may be too difficult. If most candidates perceive several steps to NOT be at least somewhat challenging, then the task may be too easy. In both cases, the task would not be appropriate as a performance measure. As will be discussed below, most task steps were somewhat challenging for most candidates and very challenging for only a few.

Similarly, performance tasks, by definition, should be educative (Stiggins, 1987; Wei & Pecheone, 2010). The feedback survey was used to explore the educative aspects of completing PAL tasks in two ways: by asking candidates to identify what was most valuable about completing each task and by asking candidates to provide an example of how completing each task fostered deeper learning for them. In all 35 candidates provided written responses, representing 69 percent of the survey respondents. As shown below, most respondents gave similar responses to these two questions, with somewhat varied detail. Across the questions for all four tasks, most respondents to the written questions (n=31) noted either the work of the task as a whole or one specific aspect of the task was valuable and fostered deeper learning as is summarized below for each task. A few--two to five candidates (representing 5-10% of the respondents with written comments)--stated that there was no value or deeper learning (because it was confusing, did not reflect the work of school leadership, or was something already being done well in their school).

Finally, because performance tasks are to be authentic work, their completion should lead to positive changes in focus area of the task. Completing authentic performance assessment tasks in school leadership should yield benefits for the school or other setting in which the work takes place because it involves planning and action in relation to authentic priorities and student learning and teacher development needs in the school. To ascertain how and in what ways completing the PAL assessment benefited their schools, PAL completers were asked to provide an example for each of the four tasks. Many provided positive examples and none provided negative examples.

## Task 1

Challenge.As shown in Table 6 below, about half the candidates perceive most steps of Task 1 to be somewhat to very challenging, with the identification of a priority area the least likely to be rated as challenging (the other options were not at all challenging and a little challenging). Reviewing three to five years of student performance data and soliciting input in developing the task were the most challenging steps, rated as very challenging by 22-24% of the candidates.

Table 6

*Percentage of 2015-16 PAL Survey Respondents Who Rated Task 1 Task Requirements as Somewhat or Very Challenging*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | % Very challenging | % Somewhat challenging | % Somewhat and very challenging |
| Review three to five years of performance data for this task. | 22% | 35% | 57% |
| Analyze relevant school and community data and other information. | 6% | 49% | 55% |
| Identify a priority area and targeted student group | 6% | 29% | 35% |
| Solicit input from students, teachers, families, and other stakeholders. | 24% | 41% | 65% |
| Develop a plan for improving school or teacher practice in a priority academic area | 10% | 43% | 53% |
| Identify improvement strategies. | 8% | 43% | 51% |
| Assess your leadership skills in completing Task 1. | 4% | 41% | 45% |

For the prior year, Field Trial candidates were asked to rate how difficult it was to complete each requirement. While the wording was different (as difficulty and challenge are not the same), the pattern of response was similar, with soliciting input from others rated as the most difficult and identifying a priority area as the least.

Learning outcomes. For Task 1, 31 candidates identified four types of learning outcomes by describing the most valuable aspect of completing this task (their comments are grouped in Table 7):

* + Collecting and analyzing data (n=14)
  + Developing a plan (n=9)
  + Learning leadership roles in the process (n=5)
  + Implementation outcomes (n=3)

In addition, four stated that it was not useful at all.

Table 7

*2015-16 PAL Respondent Comments About What Is Most Valuable Bout Doing Task 1 By Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Collecting and analyzing data |
| Most valuable to see the scope of data over a wider period of time. Good for identifying trends. |
| Researching school data was interesting and valuable but the time spent doing that distracted from other relevant day to day leadership experiences. |
| Looking at school data. |
| Learning how to look at the bigger picture |
| Looking at student data to see how students and groups of students performed on standards. |
| analyze data in a way that could be used to improve school scores |
| Learning to navigate DESE's website, as well as, accessing Edwin Analytics |
| Getting a chance to look at the data for the whole school and getting a better picture across grades. |
| Looking back at multiple years of data to notice trends. |
| I found the priority area to be enlightening as to the needs of our students as a baseline so they could overcome this gap with evidenced based strategies for academic achievement. |
| Determining a focus area |
| Getting a clear picture from the data and working with my mentor principal. |
| The data dive was valuable. The district did not really want to make all of the data available to me and we don't typically use a lot of DESE data in our district, so the leadership was a little weary. |
| Most valuable was looking at school data using Edwin Analytics and other data gathered from students, teachers, and admin. personnel. The use of the data and a target student subgroup allowed me to focus my attention on one area and develop strategies to implement possible improvement plans. |
| Developing a plan |
| The most valuable experience was to be able to put together a plan based upon the data. Creating a Theory of Action, vision and plan to move forward to improve student outcomes. |
| Creating an action plan and the strategies for that action plan |
| Using data to identify priority area, student sub groups, and establishing an improvement plan |
| I think the process of creating a school improvement plan was a very useful one. |
| Finding solutions for institutional problems. |
| Making a plan to improve student achievement |
| The experience allowed me to assess student priority areas and to work towards areas needed for improvement which is something that is required of me in my role as principal. |
| I think the most valuable what identifying what the need was and then creating the school improvement plan to work on it. Because of the timing of when we did task one (towards the end of the CAGS program) it did not seem as beneficial as it could have been if it had been done earlier in the program. |
| Analyzing data in order to assess strong and weak areas, and implementing an idea. |
| Leadership role |
| Realizing the speed at which a school can undertake a learning focus. Soliciting feedback from different stakeholders. Completing it. |
| Learning to think as a school leader, not a teacher. This meant thinking about multiple perspectives. |
| Collaboration |
| Working with another teacher to see the students gain academic growth |
| Presenting my plan to the school leadership team. |
| Relevant and Useful |
| I felt the task allowed me to participate in "real" administrative duties. The work also encompassed an entire "task", it started with the planning and ended with a reflection. I found these steps to be helpful when attempting to implement something new to a staff members or other stakeholders. |
| Whole school vision and perspective |
| Implementation outcomes |
| Student progress as a result of the initiatives implemented. |
| Actually implementing the plan was extremely valuable as I saw the entire process from beginning to end. |
| I didn't find much to be valuable for Task 1. The school I work at holds weekly data meetings where we analyze data in teams and make adjustments to instruction, assessments, etc. We also look at sub groups and help the administration make plans for working towards closing the gaps. It was difficult to come up with a new plan of action when my school already does a great job of taking action when needed. |
| Not valuable |
| That the grading is completely arbitrary. I put the most time and effort into analyzing data and received the lowest score on each of the items for analyzing data. |
| It was a waste of time. The entire process has been an incredibly useless experience that has not added any quality to my experience as a school leader. Being able to add/subtract: quantum physics: completing this foolishness: running a school. |
| The most valuable experience in completing Task 1 was that the Professor of the course aligned her expectations to this task and fully explained what was expected of this task after calling and clarifying with the state. Others in the class were facing the same challenges with lack of clarity of the task as well. |
| The tasks were applicable, but the way in which you required me to do onerous artifact gathering and proof, plus the overly prescriptive nature of the assignments, was not helpful. |

When asked about how completing Task 1 fostered deeper learning about leadership, most PAL survey respondents provided written comments in one of the following five areas, as shown in Table 8:

* Analyzing data in-depth (n=9)
* Understanding problems and student needs (n=5)
* Using data and planning (n=4)
* Working with others for input, support and collaborative planning (n=7)
* Gaining a leadership perspective about this work (n=6)

A few, three, reported little or no deeper learning in completing this task.

Table 8

*2015-16 PAL Completers written Comments about How Completing Task 1 Fostered Deeper Learning About Leadership, by Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Data analysis |
| Allowed me to learn how to dive deeper into the data and to ask probing questions of the data, as well as of the systems that are in place. |
| Data analysis. |
| Analyzing many years of data allowed me to experience an alternate side of administration |
| Allowed me to reflect on how to use data with a target group of students. |
| I was able to take a deeper look at the data over several grades. |
| had to review data and talk with stakeholders |
| analyzing data to establish strengths and weaknesses to allow for student growth |
| The dive into data was incredibly influential on my growth. It changed how I viewed​ the use of data and made me be able to identify trends and patterns. |
| I had to look across and within different grade levels and subjects to find commonality |
| Gain perspective and understanding about a priority area or student group |
| It provided a different lens through which to view students, teachers and leaders. |
| Bigger picture |
| The area it fostered deep learning was identifying specific groups that needed specific help in certain academic topics |
| Helped me to understand what it takes to find a meaningful and purposeful target area for a school |
| Provided me with an understanding of how school leaders use data to drive instruction and improve students’ achievement. |
| Using data analysis to guide planning |
| It forced me to go through the entire process- data analysis, subgroup, solicit input from a variety of folks, action plan, implementing the plan |
| This seems to be a biased question that you want to see how it promoted deep learning. I'm not sure it did. I didn't have access to the EDWIN data. I used the public facing data. It was helpful to complete the task just as writing a paper provides one with time to reflect and gain insights, but it was not authentic for the previous reasons. Even thought it was not authentic, I think it was worthwhile. Perhaps, it should be clear that it does not have to be acted up or authentic. |
| Through completing task one, I improved skills involved in collaborating, data analysis and scheduling. |
| I thought about how to mitigate achievement gaps and analyze data and work with individuals to do so. |
| Working collaborative with others and gaining input and support |
| After deciding on a topic and reviewing topic with the stake holders, I went to the administration who was very supportive with the plan. I was able to review past data, and when I was ready to present the next step of the project to the administration, they were not clear on what I was doing. I learned that as a leader, I need to be clear and transparent with all the stakeholders and enable them to have buy in as to what I was working on. By including staff in the project, they were more willing to meet with me and help me with this task. |
| During this process, I learned that you need to make sure the teachers you are working with, trust you, and are a big part of the decision making. I learned also that I can't get everything I want. For example, after working with this grade 5 team. We decided we needed more support and worked out the schedule to accommodate this need. But found out this conflicted with the Special Education students needs and had to rescind part of the plan. |
| Working with stakeholders to improve student achievement helped me to see all the moving parts of instructional leadership |
| It required that I reached out to stakeholders and involved them in part of the improvement process. This is a necessary component to eliciting real change. |
| In doing the research leading up to the findings, I had to really learn to listen to other people's perspectives and hear what they thought were priorities besides just my own instincts. I believe this will serve me well in future leadership positions and organizations. |
| Working directly with my buildings administrative team gave me insight that I would not have seen as a classroom teacher. |
| I was able to use my new skills to support a fellow teacher in fostering new learning and understanding for our students |
| Leadership perspective on this process |
| Used higher order thinking by analyzing, creating and evaluating current and future interventions |
| As an example this task allowed me to think on a different level at the school and made me see things from an administrator’s point of view. |
| I really saw how many principals are managers, and not curriculum leaders. It's easy to run a school, and much harder to lead it. |
| It forced me to meet with upper level leadership in our district. This process made me realize the power that central office holds and the importance of positive relationships and clear communication. |
| As a school leader, it is important to know the obstacles your student body faces when trying to succeed |
| Completing task 1 was an initial step into the arena of admin and leadership. They need to focus on several issues at the same time and place priorities on which initiatives to act upon. It is not an easy or arbitrary decision to prioritize issues, but a collaborative and thoughtful leadership will listen and learn from others in the building and act on what makes the most sense for all. |
| Little or no learning |
| It did not. |
| It didn't. |
| It was just another thing on my plate that I had to balance. |

Benefits for the school. PAL completers for 2015-16 were asked to explain how their work in completing Task 1 benefitted their schools. Their comments are grouped in Table 9. Most (36 respondents) provided some feedback on one or more types of benefits:

* it has some general benefits, by providing direction, producing a plan and engaging others in learning more about student needs in a priority area (n=14)
* This work lead to changes in the school, such as improving practice, adding a new program (n=11)

In addition, 11 did not think it had any benefits or were not sure, the largest number for any of the four tasks.

Table 9

*2015-16 PAL Completers Comments about How Completing Task 1 Benefited the School*

|  |
| --- |
| The work increased awareness and planning about students’ needs in a priority area |
| This plan was developed but not implemented. |
| I created an entry plan that meets my school’s needs. |
| The work in task 1 assisted in pin pointed areas for improvements |
| It aligned several initiatives. |
| I thought it was important, but my school leadership hasn't been forthcoming with feedback. |
| It has the potential to change the way special ed is enacted in catholic school |
| It supported what was already in place and moved teachers to the next level professionally. |
| Somewhat |
| It gave me the opportunity to reflect on how to improve in specific areas |
| Articulated a direction |
| We were able to open conversations about areas of need for the target subgroup and existing admin. were motivated to take the data gathered and use it to implement similar and other strategies to help the group. |
| The benefit to my school was my increased knowledge of testing benchmarks and history of MCAS/PARRC results. I was also more knowledgeable in the area of overall curriculum and student weakness. |
| It allowed me to connect to areas that needed in improvement and allow key stakeholders a voice in things that needed improvement. |
| I was able to share with colleagues that there were many students struggling with grade level standards despite being a high performing student. This was surprising to some teachers and they can be more focused on these students to try to improve their skills. |
| The work lead to changes in policies, programs or practices in the school |
| We implemented a few of the strategies in my action plan in order to improve our student performance in middle school math |
| My proposal addresses struggling readers in a "Credit Recovery Program". |
| After completing task one the principal could use my components of my action plan for future plans for the school. |
| We were able to use our test data to further assist student learning in a particular subject. |
| We put together a program that improved test scores and will be used next year, expanded to more grade levels. |
| I was able to implement an initiative that will carry on in the future directly impacting students |
| Plan was implemented to improve ELL learning and family engagement. |
| Because of task 2, I actually implemented quite a bit of task 1, however, I am getting a new principal this year with his own priorities so we will see how much continues from my work. |
| PBIS was implemented and RTI was able to fit into a tiered level of support |
| It improved instruction and teaching methods for the targeted groups of students. |
| The task I completed, involved a problem with a dip in our test scores in five math. This task allowed me to go into these classrooms, assess the problem, pull together a PLC /teachers connected to the problem and then find solutions together. It also allowed me to introduce a new method of instruction which our school leadership team is researching and try it out. The instructional strategies and teaching methods changed and made a difference in student outcomes. |
| Had little or no benefits |
| Not sure that it had any positive, direct benefit. |
| I don't know that it did |
| It didn't. It was nearly completely infeasible to roll out the plan. |
| It didn’t |
| It did not. I didn't think of anything that they hadn't already come up with or tried previously. |
| It did not benefit my school. My principal already had done the data analysis and started RTI groups to address gaps in instructional focus. I had to do it as a completely hypothetical project. Personally, I don't think a good principal would wait for an intern to undertake this analysis. I also think the task took too much political capital and relationships for a principal to want to turn it over to an intern. |
| It didn't. |
| It didn't, I already had done the work previous to doing this task. The essays were particularly useless. |
| My work with Task 1 I thought would bring two separate departments closer together and allow me to facilitate change. Because it my work was done towards the end of the year, the work I completed went nowhere. The administration read the results, were pleased with the data I collected, but there is nowhere to go with my findings as there will be many changes in the school for the upcoming year. One major change is that I will not be there. |
| Not at all. |
| Not sure. |

## Task 2

Challenge. Like Task 1, at least half the candidates rating the Task 2 requirements as somewhat or very challenging, but less than 25% rated any requirement as very challenging, as shown in Table 10. The most challenging step was the act of facilitating a group and the least was assessing their own leadership skills.

Table 10

*Percentage of 2015-16 PAL Survey Respondents Who Rated Task 2 Task Requirements as Somewhat or Very Challenging, by Requirement*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | % Very challenging | % Somewhat challenging | % very and somewhat challenging |
| Purposefully create a teacher group for professional learning based on interest | 16% | 43% | 59% |
| Consistently facilitate a teacher group’s learning in a focus area over time | 20 | 42 | 62 |
| Support individual teachers and a teacher group on improving curriculum, instruction and assessment | 18 | 33 | 51 |
| Collecting and analyzing teacher feedback on group facilitation and group learning | 16 | 41 | 57 |
| Assess your leadership skills in completing Task 2 | 10 | 31 | 41 |

The degree of challenge reported by the 2015-16 PAL completers were somewhat similar to the 2014-15 PAL completers who also rated group facilitation as most difficult of the requirements (data not shown).

Learning value and outcomes. According to written comments from 29 PAL completers as shown in Table 11, the most valuable aspect of Task 2 was:

* the process of building and leading a professional learning group of teachers (n=22);
* working collaboratively with colleagues (n=5).

At least one respondent reported that PLCs were new for the school, while two described the value of sustaining the group learning beyond task completion. Three reported that they did not experience a learning benefit from completing this task.

Table 11

*2015-16 PAL Respondent Comments About What Is Most Valuable Bout Doing Task 2 By Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Building and leading a team |
| Building community with the members of the PLC. |
| Developing a … |
| Getting the other teachers to buy into the Professional Learning Committee style of thinking. |
| Working and leading a group. |
| Working with a group of teachers on a shared task. |
| I think it was creating the professional learning group because my school had never been introduced to plcs. It was very challenging for them to create group norms and take the personal out when discussing their students work. It was rewarding for me to see when the teachers made connections with each other about learning. |
| Facilitating a small group of teachers over time. |
| Working with a small group of staff members who were supportive of my success. |
| Being able to collaborate with colleagues and coach staff |
| Learning how to gather teachers in a group learning environment without it feeling forced |
| Teamwork. |
| Actually running a PD with and for my colleagues. |
| The most valuable aspect of Task 2 was facilitating the Professional Learning Community in the area that was a true need within our school. I was able to complete a lot of this task within the confines of my day at school. I found it to be professional development that the staff needed and I was glad to provide such in depth training. |
| Working in a PLC with teachers where we together found articles to read instead of one given to us. |
| I found this task to be the one I was able to execute with some ease. However, I am an administrator already and have access to many of the teachers through evaluations and observation work already. Again, just a teacher trying to complete this task I question. |
| Working with a group of dedicated colleagues |
| Facilitating a learning group and individually coaching/mentoring teachers was a valuable experience. |
| Working with teachers. |
| Specific aspects of fostering a professional learning group |
| Running a meeting |
| Seeing how teacher personalities affect the group, and planning for that. |
| It was tailored to the needs of the educators and helped them help students. |
| Getting feedback from teachers who participated on how our PLC went |
| Collaboration |
| Collaborating with teachers and administration to come up with a plan to foster learning |
| Collaborating with other professionals to come to a common goal. |
| Collaboration |
| Collaborating with colleagues and seeing instruction change in a positive way as a result |
| Creating and working in a collaborative team. |
| Sustained teams |
| Building a group of teachers into a team. We continue to depend on the professional network that was developed in order to support each other in improving student achievement. |
| This afforded me the opportunity to create a group that utilized collaborative skills and take those skills and apply them to a more school-wide program of educational development. |
| No value |
| I did not find this task valuable or necessary. I work at a school that has teams and committees that meet and work together in various capacities. Creating another group to meet regularly was repetitive. |
| This was closely aligned to the work I do in my school. I'm disappointed that my task has not yet been scored since I submitted it a long time ago. The other three tasks were scored quickly. I would like some feedback. |
| It was a waste of time. |

Completing Task 2 enabled candidates to learn many different aspects about fostering a professional learning group and supporting their learning and practice improvement over time. Written feedback comments from 28 2015-16 PAL completers about how completing Task 2 fostered deeper learning, as listed in Table 12, clustered around the following areas:

* Leading groups (n=5)
* Communication, coordination and consensus skills (n=5)
* Using protocols and addressing other meeting logistics (n=7)
* Interpersonal skills (n=5)
* Addressing the context in group work (n=3)
* Supporting teachers in improving practice (n=3)

Only two PAL completers reported that completing this task did not foster deeper learning.

Table 12

*2015-16 PAL Completers written Comments about How Completing Task 2 Fostered Deeper Learning About Leadership, by Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Leading groups |
| Creating a group of working professionals and sharing ideas helped me develop leadership skills. |
| The leadership skills I used in organizing and facilitating the PLC were invaluable for my own learning and reflection |
| As the facilitator, I was afforded the opportunity to have to lead which is something I will need to do as a principal. |
| Task 2 allowed me to develop my expertise in an area and to lead a group of teachers to a better understanding on student needs and differentiating instruction for those needs. |
| Learning to lead a group of colleagues and act as an administrator, not as a fellow teacher. The time and effort it takes to bring a shared vision to a group. |
| Communication, coordination and consensus skills |
| Task 2 gave me the opportunity to work to build consensus among a diverse group of educators. |
| Practice listening and understanding the viewpoints of others while keeping the group focused on the goal |
| From Task 2, I had the opportunity to learn how strong group dynamics lead to school change. |
| Through task two I improved my communication, both receptive and expressive, with teachers |
| Hearing from teachers |
| Using protocols and addressing logistics for effective groups |
| It made me more aware of the details necessary to coordinate faculty and plan meaningful professional development. |
| Running a meeting |
| Having to create a team that worked under protocols and with group norms was a leadership challenge for me, however, it gave me confidence once I formed the group because they were happy to help me in any way they could. |
| I used a specific book related to understanding Data with a group of 5 staff members. Having a specific resource allowed me to carefully guide the group to a better understanding of how to interpret and utilize information to drive instruction. |
| By running future protocol, I was able to garner the support and collective vision one my staff in order to focus our work during the PD. |
| I was reminded the importance of keeping minutes and following group protocols. |
| I learned the importance of having an agenda and following the agenda during the meeting. I also saw how important it was to provide 'think' time within the group. I was also able to answer questions that came up without hesitation. Because I work so closely with the staff, it was easier to step up and lead for this task completion. |
| Interpersonal skills |
| I needed to utilize my interpersonal skills here more than in any of the other tasks. I asked my fellow department mates to participate in a PLC for a prolonged period of time. Many of our meetings were scheduled during normally busy times of the year. |
| I had to be thoughtful about how to coordinate and facilitate the meetings, and then especially thoughtful as I collected feedback. |
| Again, I consider this a biased question. Not sure the task promoted deep learning. I learned to listen to the teachers' changing goals and find new resources to support their goals. |
| Task 2 allowed me to facilitate and delegate work to my peers with an understanding that all the work was with the purpose of improving academic work |
| Professional Development is the focus of my full-time position in the school so the only difference in my skill set vs what was learned is that I helped the teachers to take on a facilitation role and bring professional readings to the group. |
| Addressing context in group work |
| Working with teachers in a union-heavy school. |
| I saw how little time there really is to get teachers together. There are so many demands on them! It was hard work, keeping focused and saying, "This is a priority." |
| This task showed me that leadership can be challenging when working with peers. I used areas for improvement to help create a learning environment for the faculty with new curriculum in our school. |
| Supporting teachers in improving practice |
| giving effective feedback to better instruction |
| There were some topics that came up that teachers in my building wanted support with. I wasn't aware they needed that support or felt that way. It was good to check in about that and I realize it will need to happen more often to ensure that teacher needs are supported. |
| The best thing about Task 2 was the research on forming PLCs, I came across numerous amounts of helpful information that I will use in forming future PLCs. One tool I came across was an Analysis Sheet teachers use to zero in on a certain lesson being taught and it can be used to zero on students results, using these to group students for additional support or enrichment. |
| Little or no learning fostered |
| It did not. |
| It didn't. |

Benefits for the school or group of teachers. As shown in Table 13, Completing Task 2 benefited the school through:

* the collaborative work of the teachers generally, for some respondents (n=7)create new or revised curriculum, instructional and assessment practices (n=13)
* to gain new insight and ideas (n=6).
* specific changes or benefits for students and teachers that resulted (n=3)

three respondents reported little or no benefit for their school in completing this task.

Table 13

*2015-16 PAL Completers Comments about How Completing Task 2 Benefited the teachers and school*

|  |
| --- |
| Create new or revised existing curriculum, instruction and assessments |
| We all enjoyed learning our subject and how we can teach it better. We created units and lesson plans based on different grade levels as well as specific subject. |
| We created a rubric that everyone uses in our school |
| It focused our attention on one task and allowed for the group to make a decision that impacted our students. It allowed the department to align some of our curricular materials. |
| The group of teachers were forging ahead and piloting a new curriculum. Without my group, they would not have had a chance to share experiences. At the same time, because it was a new curriculum, the teachers felt vulnerable about sharing and evaluating student work. |
| gave us time to collaborate and try new strategies and activities with our students |
| The teachers were able to share their ideas and work as team to create an improved curriculum for our school. |
| They got new information and resources to implement new teaching methods. |
| They are inspired to give students more choice, meet the needs of all learners, and develop lessons to address the components of UDL as a result. |
| Teachers were able to take back what we did during our time together and use it immediately. Once they used their newly learned skills, they were able to report student achievement more accurately. |
| The tools used in the PLC allowed the teachers to take time to reflect on their teaching skills, share ideas to assist students and make changes to the way they were teaching to a more effective way for all students to learn. |
| We were able to implement strategies and curriculum that directly impacted students |
| Teacher became comfortable with content area and new curriculum which translates into improved instruction. |
| Teachers were able to produce tangible work and get feedback on it that they could use in the future. |
| Insight and ideas |
| I think it gave the teachers I worked with a glimpse into what many other schools are already doing - PLC and more collaborative work. It also gave them a place to share what they were doing in their classrooms and be an "expert" with the staff, which is something we do not do enough of. |
| We gained the insight of evaluating our methods and collegially performing as a team. |
| The teachers came out with a better practice and skills necessary to teach a segment of the school population that they did not have much success. |
| It provided a different lens through which teachers and faculty could support student learning. |
| It exposed teachers to new ideas related to competency-based grading and restorative justice approaches. |
| Opportunity to collaborate |
| They had the opportunity to work as a collaborative group on meaningful tasks. |
| Allowed them to build community amongst themselves and provided them with specific training to improve their practice |
| It allows teacher to work together who were not on the same grade level |
| The ELL, SPED, and Math teachers worked together. That was new. It sets the stage for next year, when we have no pull out math. |
| Everyone was able to share ideas and the group was mutually beneficial |
| It was a powerful PD opportunity. |
| Impact on teachers and students |
| I fell they benefitted greatly, as did the students |
| Yes, the teacher I observed for Task 3 grew incredibly from the PLC. |
| There was a notable increase in student achievement and testing results. |
| Little or no benefit |
| Not very much. |
| It did not. They were not happy about having to meet in addition to their regular commitments since we already work together so closely in various capacities. |
| It was part of the general work that I already do, so it was just added work for me to engage in; it had no discernable impact to my leading. |

## Task 3

Challenge. Of the four tasks, candidates were least likely to rate the requirements of Task 3 as challenging: 35-45% of the candidates rated most requirements as somewhat or very challenging, with 10% or less rating any requirements as very challenging, as shown in Table 14. Again, these results parallel candidates’ difficulty ratings as reported for 2014-15.

Table 14

*Percentage of 2015-16 PAL Survey Respondents Who Rated Task 3 Task Requirements as Somewhat or Very Challenging, by Requirement*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | % Very challenging | % Somewhat challenging | % Very and somewhat challenging |
| Conduct a pre-observation conference | 10% | 16% | 27% |
| Document a teacher observation using a district or state guide on effective... | 6 | 37 | 43 |
| Describe teacher performance using the rubric indicator performance levels. | 6 | 33 | 40 |
| Conduct a post-observation conference that facilitates teacher rapport and learning | 8 | 29 | 37 |
| Provide constructive feedback and strategies for improvement in a post-observation conference | 10 | 35 | 45 |
| Collect and analyze teacher feedback on the effectiveness of the observation and feedback | 8 | 29 | 37 |
| Assess your leadership skills in completing Task 3. | 8 | 27 | 35 |

Learning value and outcomes. According to the 2015-16 PAL survey respondents who provided written feedback as shown in Table 15, the most valuable aspect of completing Task 3 was:

* Providing feedback or conducting a post-observation conference generally (n=16)
* the work of the task as a whole (n=4)
* learning to use the teacher evaluation rubric and observe teaching practice (n=7)
* helping a teacher improve his/her practice (n=3)

Table 15

*2015-16 PAL Respondent Comments About What Is Most Valuable About Doing Task 3 By Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| The work of this task generally |
| It was valuable to go through a complete evaluation including pre and post conference. |
| This was one of the most valuable tasks since evaluations are large part of the role as principal. It was a rewarding experience to conduct the pre and post observation meeting. The overall process was essential and positive. |
| getting real life experience observing and talking with a teacher. |
| As an observer and mentor, I realized a twofold value: appreciating the unique teaching approaches of an individual teacher; and understanding effective coaching to achieve better teacher performance. |
| Observe and using the teacher evaluation rubric |
| Learning to evaluate others based on the standards was most valuable. |
| Using teacher rubric |
| To practice using the new Educator Evaluation form and my supervision skills. |
| Learning how to observe a teacher in their role not just in the actual teaching; observing without judging or criticizing but offering suggestions |
| Observing with an evaluative eye |
| The most valuable was being able to observe instruction with specific criteria that was pre-approved with the teacher. Working with my colleague was very valuable. |
| Utilizing Baseline Edge while watching teaching |
| Providing feedback and conducting a post-observation conference |
| Real experience in observing teacher and providing feedback was very valuable. |
| Practicing the post-observation conference and feedback |
| Observing and interacting with another teacher for the purpose of providing relevant feedback for their instruction of students. |
| Giving feedback |
| Completing the post conference meeting. |
| The experience of providing detailed feedback to a colleague. |
| Getting the opportunity to work with a teacher to identify ways to improve instruction for all students. |
| This was the easiest task to do because the requirements were so clear. Perhaps all of the tasks should include a checklist. It helped me to discover how useful video could be in giving feedback and how much I like coaching teachers. |
| Task 3 allowed me to conduct a real life observation with a teacher and allow for constructive and meaningful feedback |
| I developed the art of listening and responding in a manner that did not put a classroom teacher in defensive mode and gave me the opportunity to have a professional conversation. |
| Practice providing feedback that fosters conversation rather than pointing out deficit areas |
| Actually evaluating a teacher and providing constructive feedback to help improve her weaknesses but at the same time recognize her strengths. |
| Being able to pre and post interview the teacher and discuss real teaching practice was very helpful |
| Observing teachers and giving feedback. |
| Improving my ability to provide honest, constructive feedback in a way that teachers were receptive to. |
| Giving and receiving feedback |
| Using video for observation and feedback |
| Being able to go back to the video. I wish all observations were recorded. |
| I think having the video tape and looking at it over and over...allowed me to assess the teacher's instruction more thoroughly. Sitting with the teacher and discussing some of the suggestions for improvement or compliments for effective teaching was good practice for the teacher evaluations I was conducting within my job expectations. |
| Supporting a teacher on improving |
| I was able to help support a colleague. |
| Observing and discussing teaching strategies and effectiveness with a new teacher--taking on a leadership, expert, mentor, supervisor role. |
| Really helping a struggling teacher! |

When asked how completing Task 3 fostered deep learning for their leadership development, the respondents identified a range of knowledge and skills, as shown in Table 16:

* The leadership skills for observation and feedback required for this task (n=5)
* Developing trust and rapport with the observed teacher and handling difficult conversations (n=7)
* Engaging a teacher to improve his or her practice, providing feedback (n=9)
* Logistics and tools for observation and feedback (n=4)

Three PAL completers reported little or no deeper learning from completing this task.

Table 16

*2015-16 PAL Completers written Comments about How Completing Task 3 Fostered Deeper Learning About Leadership, by Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Leadership skills for observation and feedback |
| Leaders must be able to work with and be able to evaluate the performance of all workers. This task helped me gain insight on how view others and my own performance. |
| It afforded me the opportunity to apply leadership skills and utilize a variety of evaluation tools necessary to complete the task. |
| Conducting the pre observation and post observation helped me to develop leadership skills. |
| to lead by example, not just tell but show or share ideas with the teacher |
| It made me more comfortable with the different parts of the evaluation process. It forced me to work on having difficult conversations in a caring way |
| Developing rapport and trust |
| Developing and building trust with staff to complete the task. |
| In the role of evaluator/supervisor you are the expert--especially with new or younger teachers. The ability to communicate effectively--honestly and openly--about your role as supervisor, evaluator, resource, and collaborator is the most important aspect of being a leader and supervisor. It is all about the relationship and the trust and collaboration that you need to establish with staff. |
| Provided hands on training using teacher evaluation program and categorizing observations accordingly |
| It gave me the opportunity to listen to a teacher and his/her vision for students in his/her classroom and how that can be different for each teacher, but still meet the needs of students. |
| I felt that I was able to hone my communication and professional coaching skills through this process. |
| Allowed me to practice conducting formal observations and providing feedback. |
| Provided me with experience in handling difficult conversations. |
| Engaging a teacher to improve practice and provide feedback |
| Learned how to motivate a reluctant teacher to cooperate when they are not required to. |
| Although there were areas of weakness, I was able to emphasize strengths and comment on the weaknesses. Through discussion she too saw the same weaknesses that I did and we were able to devise a plan to make it better. I truly saw that I was helping her with my skills as not only a fellow educator, but also as a leader. |
| Having a post conference conversation that was scheduled and I was able to take a deep look at the teacher and lesson from PLC to pre-observation to Post-observation. |
| It is not always easy pointing out someone else's shortcomings. I think it made me think about how to phrase those moments in a positive way and a way to make the teacher think and reflect and come up with the problem and a solution without being too direct or punitive. |
| Watching myself on the videotape giving feedback gave me much to reflect on and impacted my learning greatly |
| I have often been hesitant about giving teachers feedback that might be perceived as "too much" or hurtful. Throughout this task I was very conscious of what type of feedback the teacher wanted and needed, and I knew that I had to push myself to give thoughtful and honest (and constructive) feedback to her. |
| Deep learning that came out of Task 3 was to communicate with a teacher on their strong points and area that need improvements |
| I saw how novice teachers need baby steps, as opposed to fixing everything at once. The real challenge was to label a teacher's work as "needs improvement" in a way that showed I assumed that the teacher would, and could, improve. |
| Giving feedback |
| Logistics and tools for observation and feedback |
| I used the video in the de-brief meeting for both of us to watch and then frame the discussion from the same material. (Again, this is a biased question.) |
| It provided a structured opportunity to visit other classrooms and promoted conversation to improve instruction for student learning. |
| using state rubric to assess a teacher and giving meaningful feedback |
| I learned more about our math curriculum. |
| Little or none |
| It didn't - there wasn't anything that came out of it that I wasn't expecting. As a real life administrator evaluating teachers, there will be so many things that you just have to learn as you go because every observation and every class and every teacher are different. There are so many variables that this one mock evaluation does not prepare us well. |
| It was just an added layer of work. I already do observations and provide feedback as I am an evaluator of 20 teachers and a leader of a staff of 65. |
| For me, I'm not sure this one did as much as the others. It could be because it was the first "task" we did, the teacher I chose to work with, or the professor's carefree attitude, but I feel like I still need some practice in supervision and evaluation. |

Benefit for the observed teacher. When asked how completing Task 3 benefited the observed teacher, many 2015-16 PAL completers provided examples (as grouped in Table 17) that centered in the opportunity to reflect on one’s own practice (n=12) or learning new strategies to improve practice (n=9). Only a few respondents reported that there were little or no benefits to the teacher (n=5), while four respondents cited a school wide benefit of their own improved learning about observation and feedback (n=4).

Table 17

*2015-16 PAL Completers Comments about How Completing Task 3 Benefited the Observed Teacher*

|  |
| --- |
| Appreciated the feedback and opportunity to reflect on how to improve his/her instructional practice |
| Hopefully my colleague took to heart some of the things I noted. My delivery was, I thought caring and to the point. Most of the seemingly negative comments were already known to my friend so a new resolve to work on several parts that were negative and continue those good habits and knowledge of the U.S. History class. |
| It provided feedback and an opportunity for reflection by the teacher. |
| The teacher I worked with had selected academic language as a goal so it helped her to get additional feedback for this goal. I had to go out of district because of the contract in my district forbids videotaping observations, so the project did not benefit my internship site or the school in which the teacher I partnered with worked. It benefited the teacher because she liked feedback. |
| Both the teacher and I benefitted from this experience. |
| I was able to give constructive feedback and help with suggestions based on the observation |
| It hopefully will allow her to gain tools to help with her professional responsibilities which directly impact others in the school in her department. |
| This observation was aligned with the teacher's professional and student learning goals. |
| The teacher was appreciative of positive commentary on what they did well, and what their students gained from the learning experience. On the other hand, the coaching also brought out areas of improvement that the other teacher appreciated. |
| I felt that my work with the teacher was very beneficial for her because she was able to get feedback from a peer who was not her boss, but still was open to suggestions about her practice. |
| She told me that I provided her with feedback that she will be able to incorporate into her classroom and teaching across content areas. |
| Yes, she and I were very excited to share the process and student achievement. |
| I was able to help the teacher reflect on classroom practices, but overall I think I benefited more as I had not been an evaluator previously |
| Used the strategies and feedback provided |
| She appreciated the strategies I suggested and implemented them pretty quickly. |
| She started to use the strategy I gave her |
| It gave her strategies to use, and a sense of direction. |
| When reviewing the classroom observation video, she noticed student behaviors she was unaware of, as well as, her presentation style which she did not like. She has since been working with another teacher to work on classroom management. |
| The teacher was able to improve his practice by applying my feedback |
| The teacher was able to identify a few ways to improve the learning of all students in her class |
| She was able to see areas of both strengths and weaknesses that she was not aware of previously. She is now able to anticipate some difficulties and adjust accordingly during instruction. |
| I think the teacher found the video quite helpful. She mentioned that while we were reflecting on the task. She was very nervous at first to watch herself teaching. However, after she said, "You really don't realize how much you miss when you are standing in the front of the room talking.' One thing she did that she said she would change was to make sure the students are engaged from the beginning of the lesson. In the video it was 15 minutes in before the students participated in any shape or form. She said she would make adjustments from now on. |
| Teacher gained a different perspective about how to manage class materials/time. |
| By benefiting the candidate |
| It allowed me to seek out, meet with, and provide general feedback to observed teachers. |
| Task 3 showed me how to observed a teacher with a specific goal in mind and not look for everything at once |
| It put me in the role of a school leader and resource for others. |
| It gave me an opportunity to build relationships in my school and establish myself as a person willing to listen to ideas and not be the person to demand my vision for all teachers and students. |
| Little or no benefit |
| I don't think it really did |
| It did not. |
| Honestly, I teach in a school where there are no new teachers and I asked a friend who was a veteran teacher to help me with this project. He was kind to do so, but did not take it seriously and I'm not sure how much I or he got from it. |
| Quite the opposite, she violated her union rights and contractual agreement to allow me to video tape her. |
| It took my focus away from doing things that had a direct benefit to students as I had to devote time to this task. |

## Task 4

Challenge. Of the four tasks, 2015-16 PAL survey respondents were most likely to rate the requirements of Task 4 as somewhat to very challenging and the most likely to rate the requirements as very challenging, as shown in Table 18. Two-thirds or more of the candidates rated most requirements as challenging, including 24-35% who rated most requirements as very challenging. The most challenging (as cited as very challenging for 33-35% of the respondents) was engaging staff, leaders and family and community members in planning, creating a plan, and obtaining feedback. These results were similar to those gathered from 2014-15 Field Trial survey in which candidates were most likely to rate the Task 4 requirements as somewhat or very difficult, in contrast to the other three tasks.

Table 18

*Percentage of 2015-16 PAL Survey Respondents Who Rated Task 4 Task Requirements as Somewhat or Very Challenging, by Requirement*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task requirements | % Very challenging | % Somewhat challenging | % Very and somewhat challenging |
| Identify a priority area for improving family and community engagement | 24% | 31% | 55% |
| Engage staff, leaders and family and community leaders as a planning group | 35 | 43 | 78 |
| Create a multi-strategy plan on how to improve family and community engagement | 33 | 33 | 65 |
| Implement one planned strategy | 27 | 39 | 65 |
| Gather and analyze feedback and other evidence on the plan and strategy | 33 | 37 | 69 |
| Assess your leadership skills in completing Task 4. | 13 | 35 | 48 |

Learning value and outcomes. Twenty-nine 2015-16 PAL survey completers identified one or more valuable aspects about completing Task 4. Their comments are grouped by type of skill in Table 19. The most valuable aspects of completing Task 4 were:

* Working with and engaging family and community members (n=10)
* Collecting input on how to improve family and community engagement and planning for family and community engagement (n=4)
* Implementing a strategy (n=2)
* Having an impact on family involvement and a student need or priority (n=2)
* Developing the leadership skills for this task (n=7)

Four respondents did not find completing this task to be valuable.

Table 19

*2015-16 PAL Respondent Comments About What Is Most Valuable About Doing Task 4 By Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| Working with families and community |
| The experience was valuable in that I worked with parents of students and members of the community to help make the school community better. |
| Ability to engage families. |
| Working with families |
| Working in the community |
| Getting the three groups in my task: School, After-school, and families to sit down and talk to each other. |
| Working with parents and community members |
| Working with families and the community |
| Working with so many different parts of the school. Community |
| I collaborated within a structure that was already established at my school. |
| Working with parent and community groups |
| Collecting information and developing a plan |
| The process of identifying a school/community need and developing an outreach program was very rewarding. |
| Generating ways to Connecting the work we do in school with work parents do with students at home and in the community |
| I conducted a survey on homework... this was valuable due to the fact that our school was having difficulty with an inconsistent homework policy across grade levels. |
| Establish a focus group and community members was a valuable experience. |
| Implementing a strategy |
| Implementing one of the strategies from the action plan |
| Organizing an event that served a segment of the population that is typically marginalized by the traditional leadership and receiving commendations and follow up with those parents/family members. |
| The leadership work of this task |
| This continues to be a growing need in our district and this allowed me to get involve myself in the process in a meaningful way. |
| For me, it was that I was addressing a serious need in our school and I was able to make some concrete changes that helped our school improve behavior over the last school year. |
| A valuable experience on completing task 4 was to ability to learn how to engage family and community for the purpose on improving academic at the school |
| Thinking about the community around the school. |
| Family and community engagement are vital to the overall success of the school, and the even greater success of its students. |
| I was able to make connections in my hometown as part of this task. I was fortunate enough to have this task encompass more than one aspect of family and community involvement. If I were able to continue within the process, more success would have been evident. |
| Working with the community and the parent facilitator in our building, thus creating strong relationships. |
| Impact |
| Helping students in need |
| Seeing improvement in parent involvement and students’ behavior. |
| No value |
| I did not find anything valuable about this task. Parent and community engagement is important but this task's requirements were overboard. |
| This is a nearly impossible task to complete and implement as a student/practicing teacher. I can appreciate that it would look much different as an administrator. |
| I'm not sure |
| It was not valuable. |

Twenty-three PAL survey respondents (2015-16) provided written comments about how completing Task 4 deepened their learning about leadership generally and in specific skill areas. Their comments, listed in Table 20, clustered in four areas:

* The process entailed in completing Task 4 (n=2)
* Working with family and community members (n=8)
* The leadership skills and perspective involved in completing one or more aspects of this task (n=7)
* Specific family and community engagement strategies (n=6)

Six respondents reported that they learned little or nothing in completing this task.

Table 20

*2015-16 PAL Completers written Comments about How Completing Task 4 Fostered Deeper Learning About Leadership, by Type of Skill*

|  |
| --- |
| All aspects of the task |
| Making a plan and evaluating it for effectiveness and determining how to adjust it to improve |
| This task, more than others, really forced me to solicit input from a variety of people and stakeholders. I had to use their input to craft a plan and to implement the strategies. |
| Working with families and community members |
| Working with parents. |
| Working in the community |
| It gave me the opportunity to reach out to parents and build stronger relationships with them. |
| Task 4 helped me get an understanding on what skills are needed to be developed to have successful communication with both the community and parents |
| It allowed me to work with the families and community outside the realm of every day school activities |
| Integrating feedback from all of the different school groups to identify a common goal was eye opening. Each group came from a different perspective and I had to be open mind d about all of them. |
| Getting parents to become involved is challenging but this task provided me with ways to reach the parents who are typically not involved. |
| It is important to engage ALL parents/family members and make all members of the community, the school, and the directing of the school. Language minorities need to have a voice in school and I can help to make that happen. |
| Leadership skills in parts of the process |
| I had to place myself in a variety of leadership roles in order to complete the task. |
| I was asked by my principal to plan and lead a professional development workshop for the staff. This was an awesome opportunity. |
| Creating an event with working professionals fostered my leadership development |
| It expanded my view of educational leadership being more than just curriculum and instruction. |
| I was given the opportunity to facilitate a public forum, and meet regularly with the superintendent. It was great how he entrusted me to get the job done. He shared with me the data for me to generate questions to use during the forum. It was a great experience. |
| My leadership skills were refined as I implemented my idea, received support and feedback from all participants, and an increased presence of families who typically do not attend school events. |
| Delegating job responsibilities was instruments to this task and very important for a school leader |
| Understanding of specific strategies for families, community and students |
| Better understanding of different strategies to engage families |
| I delved into the MA Fundamentals. |
| I know that great communications with parents and making things easier to find on our web site are much needed tools to remember |
| I really had to reevaluate and change my plan when working with parent and community groups. |
| I really watched the kids and parents, and realized that I had made assumptions that were wrong. The parents want to be present in the school, but really have no access, since there are language and transportation barriers. |
| Working with parents in addition to teacher groups was different. You had to balance what you said to make sure confidentiality was considered. I learned that parents are willing to do just about anything to help their child's school. For example, when we were tallying survey information from parents, some included written comments, I thought the parent volunteers should not see some of these. I was afraid the confidential component would be effected. I later considered including a clause for parents to sign at the beginning of the project next time. I learned how to conduct a survey. |
| Little or none |
| Again, biased question. Not sure it deepened my learning. It made me realize that it's really hard to get data about family and community engagement. I couldn't find much existing data in the school or district. I felt that the scoring penalized this. |
| It didn't. |
| It didn't. |
| It took my focus away from doing other tasks necessary to run my school. Writing unnecessary essays about topics that aren't directly related to my students is a waste of my time. |
| It was the most confusing and difficult of all tasks to complete so I'm not sure it fostered any deep learning. |
| I felt that I was asking more of my principal and making her already busy schedule more grueling. |

Benefit to the school and community. Several 2015-16 PAL completers (n=23) identified specific ways in which their work in completing Task 4 benefited their school’s family or community members, as shown in Table 21. Some focused on how the task work generally improved communication, relationships and insight (n=9), while many more identified specific changes in family and community relations or school policies and practices as a result of their task completion (n=14). Six respondents cited little or no benefit for their school from completing this task. The PAL completers specific comments are grouped below by type of benefit or change.

Table 21

*2015-16 PAL Completers Comments about How Completing Task 4 Benefited Their School and Community*

|  |
| --- |
| Improved communication and work with family and community members |
| Allowed several changes to better communications with the community. |
| For the few people involved it provided an opportunity to get more insight into student engagement and making a link between learning at home and in school. |
| Working in the community |
| Brought families into the school and staff was able to build a positive relationship. |
| It brought families closer as well as the school community |
| It made us closer as a school community. Many felt more valued just by being a part of this task. |
| It supported the SIP. |
| It opened the door to greater opportunities for family and community engagement. |
| It opened the doors to parents who do not feel comfortable coming to a building that is not very inviting. |
| Lead to changes and new programs and practices |
| We had a great family event that was better attended than other events we've held this year. |
| As a result of this task several real programs were developed and will continue to be used in the future. |
| Families and community members were concerned about how discipline was handled in our school and communication was not good. I was able to start to fix these issues, which made families happier. |
| The after-school program got some good ideas about how to better support homework time, the targeted student learning area. The project didn't succeed as well at improving communication. It didn't, however, hurt communication. |
| We were able to make connection with the community to get involved with the school to help mentor our students |
| The benefits to my community and school from this task have resulted in offering school functions, related to student achievement, off site in a less threatening environment. Many of the families of my current school come from very low socio-economic background, daily efforts revolve around breaking the cycle of poverty. The feedback from the initiated outreach was very positive from the identified group. |
| A parent university was created. Teachers and parents have been submitting topics for training |
| During this task, my school was unifying with another school so the task was crucial to this process |
| We developed a forum for parents that made them feel more comfortable within our school. |
| The family members that attended were connected with community resources that even our City Connects person didn't have. IT also welcomed parents into the building outside of academics. |
| I believe the work we conducted improve the homework policy and made it more consistent for the parents, students and teachers. The second phase of the task, included starting a homework club which would include more of the community members such as volunteers and support from local businesses. I had to approach business to ask them to provide incentives to help with the homework club...this helped me move out into the community and seek their support. This is very important for an administrator to make connections with local businesses. |
| Parent participation in literacy events doubled |
| The task engaged parents and provided them with resources to extend learning at home. |
| It directly benefitted students with special needs and their families. |
| Little or no benefit |
| The work had the potential to improve family engagement in the school. However, district administration can side track one's plans without much of a recourse to change directions. This tasks poses difficulties for new people in the community/school. |
| Very little |
| It didn't - we already do a lot of various events and reach out to families that this seemed forced. |
| It hasn't yet. |
| It didn't. |
| I was unable to use my school so I went to my hometown's schools. Whether I did this task or not with this community would not have mattered much. I was just fortunate to be able to fit the task into what the community was doing... |

## Discussion

As the survey results show, most PAL completers agreed that the PAL assessment tasks are understandable, relevant and aligned to leadership standards and authentic school leader work, relevant and, for the most part, feasible to complete. Most candidates reported that they understood the task work, but were somewhat less likely to agree that they understood the scoring criteria, particularly for Task 1.

In general, 2015-16 PAL completers were more positive about these attributes than were the 2014-15 Field Trial completers, suggesting the benefits of improvements in task descriptions and instructions and increased familiarity generally with the assessment requirements.

Most candidates agreed that the tasks are sufficiently challenging (with the majority rating them as somewhat or very challenging) and to be educative, providing learning benefits that were consistent with the tasks’ focus and requirements. According to PAL completer survey feedback, the four tasks were sufficiently challenging to be appropriate as performance assessments. No step had too little challenge or too much challenge for the majority of completers. PAL completers were most likely to rate Task steps as challenging and least likely to rate Task 3 steps as challenging. Several reported that the task work was beneficial to their schools and participating teachers. The time reported to complete teach task warrants further investigation to determine if these estimates include candidates’ preparatory coursework or if some task elements are too time consuming.

The majority of PAL completers reported a range of learning benefits that aligned well to the steps of each task. Finally, the majority of PAL completers identified some type of school benefit, either as related to the task steps (such as learning to use data or understand a priority area or target student group) or as an outcome of the task (such as implementing improvement strategies or adding new parent involvement opportunities).

# Leadership Preparation Programs and PAL

As part of the follow up on PAL implementation in 2015-16, preparation program directors were surveyed about their experiences in supporting candidates and the impact of the assessment on their program design and delivery. For this section of the report, their experiences and their candidates’ sense of program preparation and support are compared and lessons learned are identified.

In Massachusetts, there are three types of preparation programs: university-only, consortium-based which may include a university affiliate, and professional association which may include a university affiliate. In 2013, all preparation programs had to submit program redesign applications for state approval. During this process or shortly thereafter, five universities and one consortium discontinued offering leadership preparation for licensure. As a result, the number of programs reduced from 29 to 23 programs, as shown in Table 22. Most programs are university-only.

Table 22:

*Number of Massachusetts approved leadership preparation programs by year*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Preparation Program | Number of programs 2013 | Number of Programs in 2015 | Number of programs in 2016 |
| University-only | 19 | 14 | 14 |
| Consortium-based | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Professional association affiliated | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 29 | 23 | 23 |

Of the 23 programs surveyed, we received usable responses from 11-12 program directors or faculty. As noted above, of the 51 PAL completers, 35 were completing or had recently completed a leadership preparation program.

## Faculty understanding of PAL and its alignment in preparation

Preparation program faculty were asked a series of questions about their understanding of the features of the PAL assessments and how effectively their programs prepared their candidates to undertake the required steps for each task. As shown in Table 23, most (and sometimes all) program faculty agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the tasks, that they were relevant to the work of school leaders, were feasible for candidates to complete, and were aligned with their program content and (less so) a catalyst for program improvement. Of these features, program faculty were least likely to agree that they understand and could explain the scoring rubrics, although the majority reported that they could. It warrants further investigation to determine what 18-33% of the program faculty cannot explain about the scoring criteria and standards.

Table 23

*Percent of program faculty who agree or strongly agree with the following attributes of the PAL assessment, by Task*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Task 1** | **Task 2** | **Task 3** | **Task 4** |
| N= | 12 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Understanding |  |  |  |  |
| I understand the task requirements | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| I understand the work candidates in my program must engage in to complete the task | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| I can explain the scoring criteria and standards used to evaluate the work products | 67 | 70 | 70 | 82 |
| I understand the difference between score levels for each scoring rubric | 75 | 80 | 70 | 82 |
| Aligned and relevant to school leadership |  |  |  |  |
| The task that my candidates completed is clearly aligned to the MA standards | 100 | 100 | 82 | 100 |
| The task provided candidates with authentic job related experiences. | 83 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| The task is relevant to the work that successful school leaders must be able to do | 92 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Feasible |  |  |  |  |
| The task is flexible and adaptable enough so that candidates in different types of school settings are able to structure meaningful activities and produce relevant products | 83 | 73 | 82 | 91 |
| It is feasible for candidates to complete the task within the structure of a course or internship that my institution offers. | 75 | 91 | 91 | 100 |
| Completing the task required a reasonable amount of work. | 83 | 82 | 100 | 91 |
| Aligned to program |  |  |  |  |
| The task is aligned to the curriculum of the program that my institution offers to prepare new school leaders | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| The process of supporting candidates in completing one task has been a catalyst | 75 | 82 | 90 | 91 |

As shown in Tables 24 to 27, almost all program faculty agreed that their program was effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete the steps for the four tasks. The least agreement was for Task 1, although most agreed that they effectively prepared candidates on these steps, because a few were less likely to agree that they prepared candidates well in reviewing and analyzing data and in identifying a priority area.

Table 24

*Percentage of program faculty who agree that their program is effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete steps for Task 1 (n=12)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step | % |
| Review three to five years of performance data for this task. | 83% |
| Analyze relevant school and community data and other information | 83 |
| Identify a priority area. And targeted student group | 75 |
| Solicit input from students, teachers, families, and other stakeholders. | 92 |
| Develop a plan for improving school or teacher practice in a priority academic area | 92 |
| Identify improvement strategies. | 92 |
| Demonstrate the ability to grow as a professional | 92 |

Table 25

*Percentage of program faculty who agree that their program is effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete steps for Task 2 (n=11)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step | % |
| Purposefully create a teacher group for professional learning | 91% |
| Consistently facilitate a teacher group’s learning in a focus area over time | 91 |
| Support individual teachers and a teacher group on improving curriculum, instruction or student assessment | 91 |
| Collecting and analyzing teacher feedback on group facilitation and group learning and work | 91 |
| Assess their leadership skills in completing Task 2. | 91 |

Table 26

*Percentage of program faculty who agree that their program is effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete steps for Task 3 (n=11)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step | % |
| Conduct a pre-observation conference. | 82% |
| Document a teacher observation using a district or state guide on effective teaching practices | 91 |
| Describe teacher performance using the rubric indicator performance levels. | 91 |
| Conduct a post-observation conference that facilitates teacher rapport and learning | 91 |
| Provide constructive feedback and strategies for improvement in a post-observation conference | 91 |
| Collect and analyze teacher feedback on the effectiveness of the observation, feedback and support | 91 |
| Assess their leadership skills in completing Task 3. | 91 |

Table 27

*Percentage of program faculty who agree that their program is effective or very effective in preparing candidates to complete steps for Task 4 (n=11)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step | % |
| Identify a priority area for improving family and community engagement that would directly or indirectly enhance student learning in a priority area | 91 |
| Engage staff, leaders and family and community leaders as a planning group to enhance family and community engagement | 82 |
| Create a multi-strategy plan on how to improve family and community engagement. | 91 |
| Implement one planned strategy | 91 |
| Gather and analyze feedback and other evidence on the plan and strategy’s effectiveness for improving family and community engagement | 82 |
| Assess their leadership skills in completing Task 4. | 91 |

When asked about the PAL resources and materials for their work in guiding candidates, the majority of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that these were helpful, particularly the rubrics, administrative guide and handbook, which two-thirds or more agreed were helpful, as shown in Table 28.

Table 28

*Percentage who agree or strongly agree that the following resources and materials were helpful for them in guiding candidates in completing the PAL Assessment by Task*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Task 1 | Task 2 | Task 3 | Task 4 |
| Number | 12 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Candidate assessment handbook | 66% | 64% | 73% | 73% |
| Handouts (letters for supervisors, handouts) | 58 | 55 | 55 | 64 |
| Task instructions | 58 | 55 | 55 | 64 |
| Rubrics | 83 | 73 | 82 | 91 |
| Ma-pal website | 58 | 64 | 82 | 73 |
| Ma pal administrative field guide for leadership preparation programs | 67 | 70 | 73 | 73 |
| Webinars and communications from MA ESE | 67 | 73 | 64 | 64 |

Finally, program faculty ranged widely in their reports on the average number of hours they spent with individual candidates on completing each task. Roughly one-third spent less than 6 hours with each candidate on each task and almost one-third spent more than 10 hours on average, as shown in Table 29. These average hours spent per task appear to be high and may warrant further investigation to confirm this level of faculty involvement and learn how they are using this time, particularly for those spending more than 10 hours per candidate per task.

Table 29

*Percentage distribution of program faculty by the number of hours spent, on average, to support an individual candidate by task*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hours | Task 1 | Task 2 | Task 3 | Task 4 |
| N= | 12 | 10 | 11 | 11 |
| 0-5 | 36% | 30% | 30% | 27. % |
| 6-10 | 36 | 40 | 40 | 36 |
| more than 10 | 27 | 30 | 30 | 36 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

## Candidate perception of PAL alignment in preparation

The PAL completers rated how well their leadership preparation was aligned to the PAL task requirements, as shown in Table 30. The majority of completers, 59%, agreed that their preparation was somewhat or very well aligned. Twenty-five percent reported that there was little or no alignment and 16 percent reported that the question did not apply to them. Adjusting for those just those who are in preparation programs, shows that 30 percent did not agree that their leadership preparation was somewhat or very well aligned with the PAL tasks.

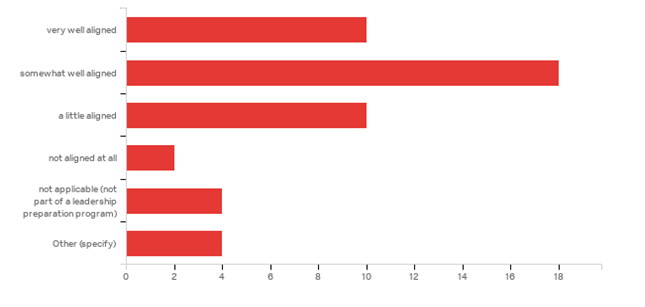
Table 30

*Percentage distribution of 2015-16 PAL completers by how well their leadership preparation was aligned to PAL (n=51)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Alignment | % of all respondents | % of those in preparation programs |
| Very well aligned | 21% | 25% |
| Somewhat well aligned | 38 | 45 |
| A little aligned | 21 | 25 |
| Not aligned at all | 4 | 5 |
| Not applicable (not part of a leadership preparation program) | 8 |  |
| Other (specify) | 8 |  |
| Total | 100% | 100% |

Figure 2

*Percent of candidates based on PAL alignment to preparation*



In response to an open-ended question, less than half of the PAL completers gave examples of how their preparation supported completing their PAL tasks. Fifteen respondents explained that their preparation was well-aligned with specific embedded assignments to support their preparation or by being prepared in and practicing specific aspects of one or more tasks, such as observation and feedback skills for Task 3, analyzing data for Task 1 or instruction on facilitating a PLC for Task 2. Three gave examples of general guidance and support they had received and three reported that they had received no support or conflicting guidance. Their comments are listed below:

1. Examples of alignment for multiple tasks:

* I did a summer intensive program and each week was very well aligned to the PAL tasks. We had a week on data analysis and action plans, teacher feedback, PLCs and school culture, and family engagement. Each week really prepared us to do these PAL tasks authentically within our school buildings.
* Some of the assignments were aligned to support our tasks. For example, in our curriculum, planning and assessment module the major assignment involved mining, analyzing and organizing data from Edwin analytics to identify a gap in student progress and outlining steps to address the issue.
* They had some of the assignments connected to the PAL tasks
* Many of my core courses were aligned with the MA PAL tasks. The work required through these courses allowed me to apply the fieldwork directly to the tasks.
* We had a 4-week intensive and each focus on a topic that aligned to tasks week 1- data, week 2- Professional development, week 3- improving instructional tasks for students, and week 4- family engagement.
* My mentor worked with me on data analysis, teacher evaluation and support, and parent needs during my apprenticeship. These are things that should be going on in schools anyway so they were relevant tasks that refined my experience. They just seemed overwhelming on top of the hours and other things expected of people in the apprenticeship route.
* My program, LLP through Teachers 21 with the MSSAA, was directly aligned with the coursework needs to complete the PALS. It was an outstanding program from an instructional aspect, a hands-on supervised practicum, and a support for the MA-PALS
* The collaborative program adjusted their requirements so that more of them fit the PAL tasks, but it felt that some experiences were diluted to meet those needs.

B. Examples of alignment for one task

* For Task one
  + One class of many, the instructor worked with us to develop observations and interviews that met PAL standard.
  + The initial research into the priority area paved the way for the rest of the Tasks as the area of focus was clear.
  + My data driven class did help with the data analysis part of the project...but I had already completed most of my course by the time the mandate to complete the MA PAL was up and running.
  + The tasks involved in PAL1 was exactly the requirements for PART of the requirements for one of the courses in the program.
* For Task two
  + We had a lot of coursework on PLCs and how to use them as a leadership tool.
  + I was charged with creating a PLC and PBIS as part of my internship
* For Task three
  + I took a course on teacher evaluation. The skills I practiced in that course were related to the skills I utilized in task 3.
  + The observation class and task 3 were aligned well during the program.

A few candidates gave examples of how they were given guidance about how to complete the tasks:

* We were able to speak to individuals from the previous year’s program who piloted the Tasks. They gave us insights in areas that they struggled and suggested ways to complete.
* The Professors of the program were instrumental in calling the state for clarifying information. Interpreting the expectations as a class was helpful during the one that aligned with the class. Other than that, I had to do all the legwork to complete these PAL tasks.
* My school supported all that I asked of them and we worked well together

A few candidates explained that they did not get support or received conflicting advice:

* The preparation program taught us a lot at the beginning but was not allowed to be supportive during the PAL Tasks.
* The preparation was not aligned at all, because we kept getting false information about what the PAL tasks requirements were. We were given three different rubrics at various times. I am on the leadership team at my school, and I continued to fulfill my professional leadership role as outlined by my district. How the work that I do in this leadership role does not support me getting a principal license is a mystery to me.
* It really didn't. I had to start from scratch to complete MA PAL.

## PAL impact on program content and experiences

Through the feedback survey, program faculty reported on how the PAL assessment requirement for principal licensure has influenced their program design and delivery. They were asked to report on the impact in four areas: candidate recruitment and retention, course content and curriculum, field experience, and program policies. Taken together, it appears that the PAL assessments aligned well for some programs or required only modest changes in program content sequence and assessments. A few faculty are rethinking their program’s curriculum and field experiences. Very few program faculty noted challenges or problems as a result of the PAL assessments, as noted below.

Candidate recruitment. Of the 12 respondents, eight program directors provided written feedback on how PAL has affected their candidate recruitment. None identified a negative influence, while two noted that there is some candidate attrition as a result of PAL:

* We have a higher attrition rate than we had in the past, though I don't see that as a bad thing, unless of course, we have significantly fewer candidates coming through the pipeline, which, I suspect, but only you would know. for sure
* Several candidates dropped out because of the assessments.

The other six did not think there was a problem with recruitment retention, including two that reported no change, and, for some, noted that the candidates expect assessments:

* Not sure I can make a direct cause and effect statement here. Our cohorts have been consistently averaging 30 - 34 so it doesn't appear that the PAL tasks are deterring candidates.
* We are a problem based learning program based on the model developed at Stanford and then expanded on by the NYC Leadership Academy. Candidates for licensure now know about the MA PAL assessments and they know that our program prepares people well for this undertaking.
* Doesn't seem to have negatively impacted. Candidates seem to expect assessment, given most have taken MTEL. They are a bit surprised at the cost and the format, but our program incorporates the assessment into course and field work. That helps.

One program faculty member reported that PAL was influencing their expectations of possible candidates, stating “We are reevaluating the requirements for entrance to the Program.”

Course content and curriculum. In terms of course content and curriculum, several reported changes (or were planning) to course content:

* We make an effort to embed some of the preparatory work into the course requirements
* The tasks have enriched our collective reflections on program approaches. I wish we could improve their writing skills during the course of the program because so many are deficient in this area unfortunately.
* I revamped the order of my research class to align the students’ proposal with PAL Task I
* We are evaluating all the courses in the Program.
* Some changes in content and assignments.
* We are realigning the syllabi and progression of courses.

A few reported that they made changes in their assignments to align with the four PAL tasks:

* We did not need to make any adjustments in our curriculum or topics covered. We did make significant changes in the assignments that we gave to comply with the 4 tasks.
* We had already created assignments for field work. We had to take out some of them and insert the components of PAL instead. In most cases the work was similar. PAL has also promoted more course work around data analysis, leading work groups, and reflecting on one's own work.

A few faculty members described task specific changes that they had made in their program.

For Task 1, one faculty member reported that they had already adapted their assignments. Four others identified general or specific changes that they had implemented this past year for Task 1:

* Focusing them earlier on assisting their principal or mentor principal in all tasks related to data analysis and application. Our Summer Intensive already put a full week of emphasis on these tasks but our people work in teams during the summer and we needed to see if they emerged with the necessary skills to take a lead role when they were back in a school setting
* We incorporated strategies for data analysis, soliciting stakeholder input, developing assessment criteria, and engaging in reflection on one's own work.
* We focused our data analysis on the process of determining a specific academic priority area.
* Changed curriculum and instruction to reflect Task 1.

In addition, one faculty member reported that the book, *Data Wise* by Boudett, City and Murnane. Faced with the PAL task, they now read avidly.

For Task 2, two faculty members reported that they modified their curriculum and removed similar assignments from the practicum. One faculty member reported that they found readings on group dynamics and organizational development to be helpful. One faculty member noted that candidates and field supervisors are helping each other be better prepared for this task:

“In the second year, I saw candidates approach this task with increasing confidence. It is not due to any changes or opportunities we built into the program this year but it is probably due to the feedback of the previous year's participants. Certainly our coaches now know the expectations so that probably accounts for the uptick in candidate confidence as well.”

Few program faculty identified changes in their program content for Task 3, with two reporting that they already do a great job in this area and one pointing out that the use of video was the only new facet for their program. One faculty member listed RBT and Danielson as useful resources with the task. One pointed out the inconsistency between this task, which includes a pre-observation meeting, and the new Educator Evaluation system which stresses unannounced observations:

“Task 3 requires candidates to perform an announced observation which is inconsistent with the new Educator Evaluation system which highly emphasizes unannounced observations. I know it would be a challenge to require an unannounced observation and to video tape at the same time but there may be another way to allow candidates to demonstrate their skill by watching a video and responding to this with written feedback which is a DESE requirement. I think this needs to be more authentic to the actual work that evaluators do.”

For task 4, the faculty members did not describe program changes, but two faculty members listed resources that they found to be useful in preparing candidates for Task 4:

* Tough, *How Children Succeed*, and Putnam, *Our Kids*
* I am pondering how we can address this area of responsibility for the principal more vigorously next year. I know that our use of Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's *The Essential Partnership* has sensitized them to the dynamics present in parent-educator meetings and conferences but we need to do a better job on the engagement and partnership piece represented in the MA PAL task.

Field experience. There appears to have been substantive changes to programs’ field experience requirements, for a few programs:

* This has resulted in significant improvement in the quality of the field experiences and insures uniformity of the experience for all candidates which had not always been true in the past
* We are rethinking the value of this experience.
* Field work focused on the 4 tasks

Two programs’ faculty reported no change (in one case because the program already required “an abundant amount of field work). In a third program, the PAL assessment requirements helped to reinforce the program’s existing emphasis on instructional leadership in field work: “Our folks now know why we want their internships to be focused on the supervision and evaluation of instruction rather than the old-time practicum jobs related to lunch and bus supervision.” Only one program faculty member noted challenges with the PAL tasks for candidates, because of their school settings:

“We have had cases where candidates in private schools have a hard time completing PAL. The video requirement is sometimes an issue for unions or school district leadership who are concerned as to how the videos may be used in future.”

Program policies. Only two preparation programs reported changes in program policies as a result of PAL. One faculty member explained that the entire program is under evaluation and another reported that the PAL tasks were built into their program’s NCATE accreditation requirements for assessment.

Program-district relationship. The PAL assessment requirements do not appear to have disrupted preparation programs’ relationships with their local districts. Several faculty members reported instead that the requirement has even improved relationships in some cases, particularly when the districts see the potential benefits of the required work:

* this has been uneven some districts embrace this with enthusiasm others, not so much
* See previous category. A third low performing district--now operating under a state-appointed Receiver--is sending us three aspirings for the 2016-2017 cohort. Another with a new Receiver has hired two of this year's graduates.
* This is mostly positive when districts realize that the candidates are not only involved in real work, but we also promote the effort as doing worthy work to actually promote student achievement.
* We are strengthening these partnerships.
* Schools needed to cooperate with students in order to complete tasks. Some districts were easier than others

Finally, program faculty were asked whether they were seeing any impact of the PAL assessment requirements on their candidates’ ability to advance into leadership positions. One intended outcome of the assessments would be that candidates would be better prepared and have already demonstrated initial leadership proficiency, making them potentially more ready for new leadership positions. A few program faculty reported that it was too soon to tell. But two were already experiencing very positive career benefits:

* Our people approach leadership opportunities with confidence. Principals are reporting to their superintendents that they are seeing a difference in the performance of graduates who now serve on their leadership teams.
* Positive impact here. The work candidates do in PAL create strong portfolio components for interviews. Many say they feel very ready for the work.

## Deeper learning for candidates

Program faculty described, in open ended survey comments, how completing the tasks fostered deep learning for their candidates. Most of the respondents offered at least one example for one of the four tasks and several provided examples for all four tasks.

Task 1. When asked how completing Task 1 fostered deep learning for program candidates, the program faculty pointed to two aspects of this task: using data and learning to engage in school improvement planning, as their comments below show:

Using data

* It helped them learn an authentic way of analyzing data and writing a school improvement plan based on a thorough and careful analysis.
* This was their first opportunity to grapple with data analysis tasks on an individual basis in the school setting.
* We have them analyze and use real data. In some cases, when candidates are in schools that do not serve large numbers of students in the federally identified categories, we have worked with our candidates to find ways to still seek places where there are gaps in student performance.
* Use of data to drive decision making.
* Looking at a priority area for their school

Improvement planning

* Candidates, particularly those whose primary experience has been in their own classrooms, gain awareness of the larger context in which they operate and the complications associated with true improvement.
* Task I deepened students understanding of why it is important to reflect on school growth prior to plan initiative and development.

Task 2. Program faculty reported that completing Task 2 enabled their candidates to gain deep learning about group facilitation and the role of collaborative work in school improvement.

Group facilitation

* Completing this task helped them learn to facilitate groups which is a key skill in school leadership.
* Working with others who may disagree with leadership inspired candidates.
* The ability to facilitate the group process and focus on a learning area

Role of collaborative work in school improvement

* They emerge with a conviction that collaborative work and conversation on teacher teams is a source of vitality in a school. They hone skills in facilitating group dynamics, setting agendas, planning the organizational infrastructure for a successful outcome and dealing with difficult people through this task.
* Having candidates take a leadership role in study groups is a new experience to many. We discuss and work with candidates around ways to do so.

Task 3.Program faculty gave few examples of how completing Task 3 fostered deep learning for candidates, but those who did stressed the centrality of this task to school leadership and the value of this task in enabling candidates to learn about supervision and feedback.

* It caused them to have a conversation with teachers about an observed episode of teaching which is an important aspect of leadership.
* this is the heart of the matter
* I saw our candidates gain increasing skills in conveying meaningful feedback to their teachers. Execution of this task proceeded smoothly. No one this year expressed fears about being blocked by the union or having a parent prevent videotaping.
* The requirements of PAL force candidates into what is often early ventures into supervision, observation and conferencing to promote student learning. Candidates are sometimes amazed at how much more is involved than they previously thought.
* Actually performing an evaluation inspired candidates.

Task 4. A few Program faculty reported that completing Task 4 fostered deep learning by exposing candidates to more tools, resources and perspective, but noted that more preparation is needed.

* Candidate must consider broader context
* Various publications and internet search engine documents
* Engaging families and the community to improve academic performance is not used regularly in school systems. This is the most challenging task.
* Working with a family group took time and effort to enlist the support of families

## 

## Discussion

Based on the program faculty survey feedback, it appears that programs have become knowledgeable about the PAL assessments and made modest program changes to support candidate readiness to undertake the work for each task. As shown, almost all program faculty agreed that they understood the tasks, that the tasks were aligned to standards and work for school leaders, and generally were flexible and aligned to their programs.

Most program faculty agreed that their programs were effective in preparing candidates in the steps for each task and the majority agreed that resources were helpful, particularly the rubrics. PAL completers agreed, but were somewhat less positive. Seventy percent of the PAL completers from leadership preparation programs agreed that their programs were aligned very well aligned to the PAL assessments. Both program faculty and PAL completers gave similar examples about how the preparation programs supported candidates in preparing for the work that the tasks entailed.

Both completers and program faculty reported a wide range of time spent on completing the tasks. These differences may reflect the timing of preparation and assessment completion, with many PAL completers having completed coursework prior to more recent program changes to align with PAL. In addition, program faculty and PAL completers provided similar examples of how completing PAL assessments fostered deeper learning for candidates.

Taken together, the program faculty and candidate feedback suggests that the PAL assessments have had a positive effect on programs and little negative effect. Based on program faculty feedback, it appears that the PAL assessments have not influenced their candidate recruitment, enrollment and retention, and has had a modest, positive influence on program content through program content alignment and sequencing, the addition of topics in relation to specific tasks (e.g. data analysis and observation) and expectations for field work. There have been modest, positive changes in program-district relations, particularly in understanding PAL. Finally, a few program faculty see career advancement benefits for their candidates.

# Findings: Performance Assessment Results

During Program Year 2015-16, 347 candidates enrolled in PAL to complete the assessment for licensure (as shown in Table 31). This included 91 candidates who had completed 1-3 tasks as part of the Field Trial, 47 candidates who completed 1-3 tasks as part of the Program Year only, 86 candidates who completed no tasks, and 153 candidates who completed all four tasks as part of the Program Year. In contrast, 416 candidates completed all four tasks as part of the Field Trial.

Table 31

*Number of Candidates Who Enrolled in Program year 2015-16 for PAL submission by Initial status and number of tasks completed*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task submissions completed | Program Year  2015-16 | Completed some during the Field Trial and finished during PY 2015-16 | Completed during the Field Trial 2014-15 |
| All four tasks | 153\* | 67 | 477\*\* |
| 1-3 tasks | 47 | 24 | 113 |
| 0 tasks | 86 | NA | 179 |
| Total | 256 | 91 | 769 |

\*This **excludes** submissions being reviewed for irregularities and retakes; \*\* This **includes** irregularities and submissions that were returned; only 422 of the PAL completers in the Field Trial had four scorable task submissions.

As noted in the introduction, at the beginning of the program year, DESE implemented several policy and assessment changes with their contractor, Bank Street College. These included:

* Establishing passing criteria in which candidates must attain at least a 2.1 threshold score for each task submission and a combined score of 2.5 to successfully complete the assessment.
* Requiring candidates to pay a fee of $500 to complete the performance assessment.
* Revising the instructions and rubrics to provide more guidance on the work products, simplify the tasks in some areas, and clarify performance level differences on the rubrics.

The performance assessment results for the 153 candidates who completed all four tasks provides an opportunity to review the validity of the assessments. By comparing the results to the Field Trial scores, the effects of these policies and other efforts, such as improved leadership preparation, can be ascertained.

The sample size is too small, however, to allow replication of all analyses performed on the Field Trial data and reported in the Technical Report (Orr et al., 2016), particularly the factor analysis and reliability tests. Nonetheless, analyses of these scores and a comparison to between the 2015-16 Program Year scores and the Field Trial scores are insightful and demonstrate the validity of the assessments for leadership licensure purposes.

Table 32 shows the percentage distribution of 2015-16 PAL completers by performance level for the four tasks and percentage distributions by gender, preparation pathway and race/ethnicity. As shown here, only a small percentage of candidates did not achieve the threshold of 2.1 for each task, with the exception of Task 4. This includes 1% of all candidates for Tasks 2 and 3, 6% for Task 1, and 12% for Task 4. Similarly, only a small percentage had exemplary scores for any task, only 1% of Task 1. Half or more of all PAL completers scored at meeting or above (3.0-3.9) on Tasks 1 (54%), 2 (52%), and 3 (50%), and almost as much on Task 4 (48%).

These percentage distributions differed somewhat by gender and program pathway. PAL completers from preparation programs were more likely than alternatively prepared candidates to score higher on Tasks 1, 2 and 4 and scored similarly on Task 3. Male and female candidates scored similarly on Tasks 1, 3 and 4, but female candidates scored higher on Task 2. While there are too few numbers of non-white candidates to make meaningful comparisons in the score distributions, the results suggest that non-white candidates have more difficulty with Task 4 than do white candidates. This may be related to differences in preparation or context and is worth further investigation.

Table 32

*Percentage distribution of 2015-16 PAL Completers by task, performance level, and demographic characteristics*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristics | MA-PAL Task 1 | | | | |  | MA-PAL Task 2 | | | |  | MA-PAL Task 3 | | | |  | MA-PAL Task 4 | | | |
| N | 0-2.0 | 2.1-2.9 | 3.0-3.9 | 4 |  | 0-2.0 | 2.1-2.9 | 3.0-3.9 | 4 |  | 0-2.0 | 2.1-2.9 | 3.0-3.9 | 4 |  | 0-2.0 | 2.1-2.9 | 3.0-3.9 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| All Candidates | 153 | 6% | 39% | 54% | 1% |  | 1% | 46% | 52% | 0% |  | 1% | 49% | 50% | 0% |  | 12% | 48% | 41% | 0% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preparation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Non-Program | 44 | 16 | 43 | 39 | 2 |  | 2 | 48 | 50 | 0 |  | 0 | 61 | 39 | 0 |  | 20 | 48 | 32 | 0 |
| Program | 109 | 2 | 37 | 61 | 1 |  | 1 | 46 | 53 | 0 |  | 2 | 44 | 54 | 0 |  | 8 | 48 | 44 | 0 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 6 | 38 | 55 | 2 |  | 2 | 41 | 58 | 0 |  | 1 | 51 | 48 | 0 |  | 13 | 46 | 41 | 0 |
| Male | 47 | 6 | 40 | 53 | 0 |  | 0 | 60 | 40 | 0 |  | 2 | 45 | 53 | 0 |  | 9 | 51 | 40 | 0 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Black | 11 | 0 | 45 | 55 | 0 |  | 0 | 64 | 36 | 0 |  | 0 | 55 | 45 | 0 |  | 27 | 64 | 9 | 0 |
| Asian | 5 | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |  | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |  | 0 | 20 | 80 | 0 |  | 0 | 80 | 20 | 0 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 7 | 36 | 57 | 0 |  | 0 | 43 | 57 | 0 |  | 0 | 36 | 64 | 0 |  | 7 | 64 | 29 | 0 |
| White | 110 | 7 | 38 | 53 | 2 |  | 2 | 45 | 54 | 0 |  | 2 | 54 | 45 | 0 |  | 12 | 43 | 45 | 0 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 | 0 | 38 | 62 | 0 |  | 0 | 54 | 46 | 0 |  | 0 | 31 | 69 | 0 |  | 8 | 46 | 46 | 0 |

Next, we examined the mean scores for the tasks and domains. Like the Field Trial results, these show that the candidates’ domain scores are fairly similar within each task, as shown in Table 33.

Table 33

*Means and standard deviations for domain scores and total scores for each task (N=153)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tasks and domains | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Task 1  Leadership through a vision for high student achievement | 2.89 | .39 |
| * T1D1 Investigate and Prepare a Vision | 2.85 | .48 |
| * T1D2 Design an Integrated Plan for Strategies | 2.87 | .44 |
| * T1D3Assess and Analyze Feedback from Participants and self-analysis | 2.95 | .46 |
| Task 2  Instructional leadership for a professional learning culture | 2.92 | .38 |
| * T2D1 Plan to Facilitate Team Learning | 2.96 | .35 |
| * T2D2 Enact a Professional Learning Culture | 2.92 | .48 |
| * T2D3 Assess Team Learning to Improve Ongoing Group Learning and self-analysis | 2.88 | .52 |
| Task 3  Leadership in observing, assessing, and supporting individual teacher effectiveness | 2.91 | .30 |
| * T3D1 Plan | 2.93 | .39 |
| * T3D2 Conduct the Observation | 2.76 | .39 |
| * T3D3 Provide Feedback and Suggest Support | 2.95 | .35 |
| * T3D4 Assess: Analyze and Identify Implications | 2.92 | .54 |
| Task 4  Leadership for family engagement and community involvement | 2.75 | .55 |
| * T4D1 Plan to Promote Family and Community Involvement | 2.72 | .60 |
| * T4D2 Implement an Engagement or Involvement Strategy | 2.82 | .77 |
| * T4D3 Analyze Feedback from Participants & Assess Leadership Skills | 2.74 | .57 |

Table 34 presents the means and standard deviations for each task for the Program Year 2015-16 PAL completers and compares these with the same results from the Field Trial. The results are fairly similar, and somewhat higher for Tasks 1, 3 and 4. The greater difference between the two samples is that the standard deviations are smaller for the Program Year results in comparison to the Field Trial, suggesting the influence of the threshold and cut scores on candidate performance, as well as the improved preparation.

Table 34

*Descriptive Statistics by Task*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Program Year 2015-16 | | | | | Field Trial 2014-15 | | |
| Task | Number | Minimum  Score | Maximum  Score | Mean | Standard  Deviation | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| 1 | 153 | 1.3 | 4 | 2.89 | .39 | 421 | 2.76 | .55 |
| 2 | 153 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 2.92 | .38 | 418 | 2.97 | .53 |
| 3 | 153 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 2.91 | .30 | 416 | 2.86 | .47 |
| 4 | 153 | 1.2 | 3.8 | 2.75 | .55 | 418 | 2.67 | .69 |

*Note*: The total score for each task is based on averaging the domain scores

Given that candidates had to achieve a composite average score of 2.5 for Program Year 2015-16 to pass PAL and be recommended for principal licensure, we evaluated the percentage of the PAL completers who passed and how well. We also took into consideration that candidates will be required to achieve a composite average score of 2.75 for Program Year 2016-17 and thus evaluated the percentage who would achieve or exceed this cut score as well. The results show, in Table 35, that 88 percent had scores met or exceeded the total average composite PAL score (2.5) for 2015-16 and 72 percent had scores that met or exceeded the total average composite PAL score level (2.75) for 2016-17.

Table 35

*Percentage distribution of PAL completers for 2015-16 by total average PAL score*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Score range | number | percent |
| Less than 2.50 | 18 | 11.8% |
| 2.50-2.74 | 25 | 16.3 |
| 2.75-2.99 | 53 | 34.6 |
| 3.00 and above | 57 | 37.3 |
| Total | 153 | 100% |

The overall mean was 2.87 with a .284 standard deviation. Taken together, almost all of the completers had achieved total composite passing scores (most of those who did not meet the 2.1 threshold were not completers because their tasks had been returned for revision and thus are excluded from this calculation). Almost all would have achieved the new threshold cut-score as well.

Next, we investigated the influence of preparation pathway and gender on candidate performance. While overall scores showed no statistically significant difference, there was a consistent pattern in the differences by task by preparation pathway but not by gender. As shown in Tables 36 to 39, PAL completers from preparation programs scored higher than PAL completers from alternative pathways in Tasks 1 and 4 and somewhat higher in Task 2 and 3. There was not a consistent difference by gender, however. Male and female PAL completers scored somewhat differently on the various tasks, with male PAL completers scoring higher on Task 1 and female PAL completers scoring higher on Task 2, and comparably on the other two tasks.

Table 36

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Score by Demographic Attribute- Task 1*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidates Demographics | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Preparation Pathway |  |  |  |
| Preparation program | 109 | 2.95 | .30 |
| Alternative pathway | 44 | 2.75 | .52 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 2.88 | .39 |
| Male | 47 | 2.92 | .38 |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |
| White | 110 | 2.87 | .41 |
| African American | 11 | 2.99 | .25 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 2.84 | .47 |
| Asian | 5 | 2.90 | .15 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 | 3.00 | .23 |

Table 37

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Score by Demographic Attribute- Task 2*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidates Demographics | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Preparation Pathway |  |  |  |
| Preparation program | 109 | 2.96 | .39 |
| Alternative pathway | 44 | 2.89 | .38 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 2.96 | .40 |
| Male | 47 | 2.83 | .32 |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |
| White | 110 | 2.91 | .38 |
| African American | 11 | 2.85 | .38 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 2.99 | .40 |
| Asian | 5 | 3.08 | .41 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 | 2.95 | .30 |

Table 38

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Score by Demographic Attribute- Task 3*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidates Demographics | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Preparation Pathway |  |  |  |
| Preparation program | 109 | 2.93 | .30 |
| Alternative pathway | 44 | 2.87 | .29 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 2.92 | .29 |
| Male | 47 | 2.89 | .30 |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |
| White | 110 | 2.89 | .31 |
| African American | 11 | 2.92 | .19 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 2.94 | .25 |
| Asian | 5 | 3.06 | .14 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 | 2.99 | .29 |

Table 39

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Score by Demographic Attribute- Task 4*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidates Demographics | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Preparation Pathway |  |  |  |
| Preparation program | 109 | 2.85 | .52 |
| Alternative pathway | 44 | 2.58 | .57 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 2.72 | .57 |
| Male | 47 | 2.79 | .50 |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |
| White | 110 | 2.78 | .57 |
| African American | 11 | 2.42 | .39 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 2.67 | .52 |
| Asian | 5 | 2.78 | .16 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 | 2.82 | .57 |

The PAL completers’ total PAL scores were compared by preparation pathway, gender and race/ethnicity, the results of which are shown in Table 40. Using t-tests for comparison of pairs by pathway and gender, the results were not statistically significant. The samples were too small for score comparison by race/ethnicity, although the results are shown for discussion purposes.

Table 40

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Total Score by Demographic Attribute*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Candidates Demographics | Number | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Preparation Pathway |  |  |  |
| Preparation program | 109 | 2.90 | .26 |
| Alternative pathway | 44 | 2.78 | .33 |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| Female | 106 | 2.87 | .30 |
| Male | 47 | 2.86 | .26 |
| Race/Ethnicity |  |  |  |
| White | 110 | 2.86 | .30 |
| African American | 11 | 2.79 | .18 |
| Hispanic | 14 | 2.86 | .30 |
| Asian | 5 | 2.96 | .18 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 13 |  |  |

Note: The differences are not statistically significant.

As was done with the Field Trial results, the task scores were correlated to evaluate the degree of association. Again, the four factors have a modest, positive correlation for Task 1, 2 and 4. Task 3 has almost no measure of association with Task 1 but a modest, positive correlation with Tasks 2 and 4, as shown in Table 41.These correlations are similar to those obtained for the Field Trial scores, with the exception of the lack of correlation between Tasks 1 and 3, which were modestly correlated then (Orr et al., 2016)

Table 41

*Factor Correlation for Four Factors (Tasks)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Factors | Factors | | | |
| F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 |
| F1 | 1.00 | -- | -- | -- |
| F2 | 0.263\*\* | 1.00 | -- | -- |
| F3 | 0.078 | 0.260\*\* | 1.00 | -- |
| F4 | 0.388\*\* | 0.421\*\* | 0.291\*\* | 1.00 |

  \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level

# Discussion

The PAL completer score results were quite positive for Program Year 2015-16. Eighty-eight of the PAL completers met or exceeded the total composite passing score for PAL of 2.5 Moreover, half or more scored at or above a 3.0 on three of the four tasks. There was a drop in the number of candidates who started and completed all four tasks in Program Year 2015-16, with only one-third of those participating in comparison to the Field Trial number. This drop is likely due to the addition of the cut score and fee payment policies which may have caused candidates to be more cautious about submitting work until they were ready.

Overall, PAL completers scored higher and their score range was more narrow in Program Year 2015-16 than in the prior year, in part because candidates with scores that fell below the threshold (2.1) on any task were not included, as their work remained incomplete. PAL completers from preparation programs appeared to have performed better on the four tasks and overall than those who were not, while male and female candidates appeared to have performed similarly.

The smaller number of completers hindered statistical comparison of candidate performance and evaluation of the scores through factor analysis and reliability analyses. Nonetheless, correlations of candidate scores between tasks shows that these tasks continue to be independent measures with modest degrees of association (the strongest being between tasks 1 and 4 and the weakest between tasks 1 and 3).

# Conclusions

In the second year of implementation of PAL assessments for principal licensure in Massachusetts (and first year with cut scores and fee payment requirements), the assessments continue to work well in differentiating candidate performance on dimensions of school leader readiness based on the score distributions. In this second implementation year, PAL completers and program faculty continue to report that the tasks are understandable, feasible, and relevant to school leader work, as they had during the Field Trial. Moreover, program faculty report positive improvements in one or more areas to strengthen candidate readiness and no problems in candidate recruitment and retention or relations with local districts over the work required for candidates to complete PAL. Both PAL completers and program faculty report positive learning benefits for candidates in completing the PAL tasks and many PAL candidates report benefits for their schools and the teachers involved in the tasks.

In this second implementation year, candidates’ scores improved over the prior year, particularly for Tasks 1, 2 and 4. Most (88%) achieved passing total scores (2.5 or higher) and the majority (72%) achieved the passing score levels set for Program Year 2016-17 (2.75). It is likely that candidates’ scores improved in 2015-16 because of improved candidate and program faculty understanding of the task requirements, awareness of the proficiency expectations in both the threshold scores (2.1 minimum for each task) and the average composite score (2.5) for all four tasks, and sensitivity to the fee payment requirements ($500) and added costs for retakes ($150 per task). Finally, refinements in the instructions and rubrics may have improved the quality and completeness of candidates’ submissions for scoring.

Thus, PAL, as an assessment system in Massachusetts, continues to achieve its intended design and purpose: enabling candidates to complete authentic work and demonstrate their leadership skills, providing an educative experience as part of the assessment process, and yielding positive benefits for the schools where the candidates complete their tasks and for the teachers who participate with them.

Continued research is needed to track the time demands of the four tasks for both candidates and supervising faculty and to explore the conditions for those who are spending above average amounts of time on these assessments. Continued research is also needed to evaluate differences in candidate performance on the four tasks that may be related to their preparation or demographic characteristics. Finally, with larger samples of completers, the scoring reliability should continue to be evaluated to ensure that the assessments meet their intended evaluative function.

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