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Differentiating the Principal Evaluation: Policy Advocacy Document

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**DIFFERENTIATING THE PRINCIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEM:
POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT**

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University

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DIGITAL COMMONS DOCUMENT ORIGINATION STATEMENT

This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning. This program evaluation examined the impact of teacher efficacy on progress monitoring structures to impact student achievement. Teacher efficacy is an important factor in implementing progress monitoring structures with fidelity to impact student achievement.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006). When teachers implement the instructional cycle with fidelity, planning instruction, incorporating research based practices, assessing instruction, and analyzing data, the use of progress monitoring can shift from a mundane task needing to be completed for the administration, district, and/or state, to an integral component of teaching (Santi & Vaughn, 2007).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995). High quality school leadership is pertinent to improving school performance and raising student achievement. Implementing this policy could create a more equitable evaluation system to support, hire, and retain effective leadership in every school in Chicago

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ABSTRACT

High quality school leadership is pertinent to improving school performance and raising student achievement. Research supports that the impact of leadership is most significant in schools with the greatest needs (Clifford & Ross, 2012). Further, research suggests that leadership is the second most important factor impacting student achievement (Mitgang, 2013). This policy advocates for Chicago Public School (CPS) District 299 to implement a policy that differentiates Principal Evaluation. Implementing this policy could create a more equitable evaluation system to support, hire, and retain effective leadership in every school in Chicago. Creating a policy to support the implementation of a principal evaluation system designed to provide all students the high-quality education they deserve represents a critical tool for building equity in the education children receive in every school in CPS District 299.

PREFACE: LEADERSHIP LESSONS LEARNED

I believe the effectiveness of school improvement is correlated to school leadership. Research purports that 60% of a school's impact on student achievement can be attributed to the effectiveness of the teacher and principal, with the school principal alone accounting for more than a 25% of the total school effects (Shelton, 2010).

Proposing a policy to differentiate the evaluation for principals in CPS is a channel to providing a change focused on promoting an equitable education to all students. I learned that designing a principal evaluation policy that encourages principals to serve our disadvantaged students, families, and communities is not simple.

However, policies promoting high quality leadership in every school is a must in order to implement sustained school improvement in schools designated as disadvantaged. To genuinely impact student achievement, creating policies that work is a must, as well as putting an implementation plan in place to ensure the policy is working and the intended goal is being met. Given the nexus between a highly-effective principal and academic success for all students, implementing a policy to differentiate the principal evaluation system can be a key strategy for strengthening school leadership, improving schools, and transforming the entire school district.

Upon reflection, I know many stakeholders will suggest I am proposing the removal of high-quality principals from schools referred to as, *performing schools*. However, this is not the case. I am proposing a process designed to strengthen the principal pool in order to hire and retain high quality leadership. This is an issue that needs addressing, politically, throughout the process.

As a school administrator in CPS District 299, I have seen high principal turnover in recent times. In 2012, a study of first-year New Leader Principals—a national nonprofit program for school leaders—reported that more than 20% of newly appointed principals vacated their positions within the first two years, with this mostly impacting lower-performing schools (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Many principals take on schools, assured they have the training and tools necessary to fulfill the job; however, the training they received has not prepared them for the differentiated needs that come with the principalship. The varied expectations, coupled with insufficient support and preparation, contributes to higher turnover in low-performing schools and perpetuates a vicious cycle of failure.

All principals in the district are evaluated using the same evaluation tool. I learned that for the district to recruit and retain high quality leaders, the district must make adjustments to their policies and create innovative ways to attract those vested high quality candidates willing to serve the neediest students. The policy development, adoption, and implementation process is multifaceted and involves numerous constituents with concerns, which can be daunting.

Several steps must be taken to get a policy adopted. First, a need for the policy must be identified. Second, the policy has to be conceptualized. Third, stakeholders have to be identified. Last, the policy has to be adopted and implemented. While several steps are simpler than others, all the steps are critical to ensuring the policy is successfully developed and implemented. Buy-in from constituency groups will be vital to the successful adoption of the policy. As well, policies are sometimes adjusted to meet the needs of the majority or most powerful constituency group. Yes! Policy adoption is

political. To get a policy adopted, it has to be more than just the right thing to do. The policy has to be politically expedient.

Therefore, I must continue to build my political acumen if I am to get policies implemented that I conclude are in our children's best interest.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

Becoming Aware of the Policy

The launching of Sputnik on October 5, 1957 helped bring about changes in American education, which still drives some educational reformist thinking today (Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, & Lombard, 2009). Over the last several decades, numerous school reform practices have been implemented. These reforms can be rooted in governmental laws or local community expectations. The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act* was a major recent school reform initiative that encouraged states and districts to evaluate school performance based on test scores. School principals have been removed from school leadership based on student test data aligned to these school reforms. More recently, the *Every Student Succeed Act* (ESSA) implemented similar reform expectations. Schools have to demonstrate improvement in several areas, including student academics and school culture and climate. National attention on principal effectiveness related to this reform has accelerated the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) analysis of principal evaluation (Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Fetters, 2012).

In our nation's haste to quantify principal effectiveness (based to a large degree on student standardized assessment scores), we continue to create a one-size-fits-all evaluation model. Principals of schools that have 50% or higher mobility rate, students several years below grade level, and a school culture that has been struggling with low performance for numerous years are evaluated using the same measures as principals from affluent schools not challenged by similar concerns. One-size-fits-all principal

evaluation measures have been used to identify underperforming principals as well as performing principals. These measures are used to identify school's that should be turned around relieving all current staff of their positions. It is most usually schools in minority neighborhoods that find themselves the target of school reform. Principals of these schools can find it very difficult to retain their positions based on the school's inability to meet the benchmarks set by the principal's evaluation. Several high quality principals may have been dismissed from the district based on their place in challenging schools.

During this researcher's tenure as a school leader, several school principals have been discharged from their position. From this experience, it appears the bulk of school principals dismissed for lack of student achievement have been in minority schools and some of the most challenging (Caref, Hains, Jankov, & Bordenkircher, 2014; De la Torre & Gwynne, 2009). This appears to suggest that principals who serve our neediest children will find themselves the most vulnerable.

Critical Issues

School principals are a vital component in school improvement and students' academic success (Clifford & Ross, 2012). While teachers have a direct impact on student achievement, the school principal affects all students in a particular school. Principals significantly influence teacher quality by recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers while also removing less effective ones and by ensuring all students have the most qualified teacher in front of them. Effective teachers and principals are two of the most important school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Research shows that 60% of a school's influence on student achievement is attributable

to teacher and principal effectiveness, with principals alone accounting for about a quarter of the total school effects (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005).

Recent state laws have driven some ideology around principal evaluation aligned to school improvement. In 2010, the Illinois legislature passed and the governor signed the *Performance Evaluation Reform Act* (PERA), which required all school districts in the state of Illinois to develop educator evaluation systems that evaluate educators (Milanowski et al., 2016). The PERA mandated that districts implement new principal evaluation systems by the beginning of the 2012–13 school year. While PERA-compliant teacher evaluations were phased in across the state, school districts were required to begin evaluating all principals each year using a combination of measures of professional practice aligned with the Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders and student achievement growth beginning in the 2012–13 school year. According to information provided on the CPS website, CPS uses a principal evaluation system that holds principals accountable for student growth and competencies that assess leadership excellence such as maintaining powerful professional learning systems and building a culture focused on college and career readiness.

The school principal's role has continued to expand over the last several decades. Principals are school managers—expected to lead effective school change, manage school culture and climate, increase student achievement, and help staff develop professionally. Based on this researcher's experiences as a school administrator, principal, and assistant principal, school administrators need to be managers as well as the instructional leaders.

A quality principal evaluation system should be designed to support the principal's growth and development. In 2010, the PERA was signed into law requiring all schools in the state of Illinois to change how teachers' and principals' were evaluated. The PERA required all school districts to create and implement performance evaluation systems that measure teachers' and principals' professional skills as well as measuring students' academic growth.

Chicago Public Schools' principal evaluations are divided into 50% student growth data and 50% professional practice. Creating a policy that differentiates the principal evaluation system could add greater clarity to the application of the principal evaluation. A policy designed by CPS could outline and create guidelines for the implementation of PERA, thereby reducing confusion and ensuring that the law is differentiated as appropriate. This policy should be in alignment with the diversity of the over 600 schools serving the students of the city of Chicago. It is true that strong school principals cultivate high-performing schools, attract and retain high quality school staff, and build sustainable positive school cultures (Haller, Hunt, Pacha, & Fazekas, 2016). Principal evaluation systems are almost always synonymous with school evaluation. Notwithstanding, principal evaluations systems are often one size fits all, not taking into account the variances of schools and districts.

Schools and districts, per pupil spending, can vary in some instances. The highest poverty districts in the country receive about \$1,200 less per student than the lowest poverty districts. The differences are even larger—roughly \$2,000 per student—between districts serving the most students of color and those serving the fewest (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). Further, the facilities at one school may resemble a luxury hotel while

another may seem more like a dilapidated trailer. The parental support at one school may be minuscule while at another, enormous. Budget reductions in inner-city schools further add to the reduced resources many principals have to work with and impact educational basics in a negative way. While wealthy school budgets may be reduced, the impact is often on extension activities and programs. The most inexperienced and lowest paid teachers are often clustered in inner-city schools, adding to the lack of student achievement that impact the principal's evaluation.

A culture of underperformance by school staff, students, and the community is an additional hurdle some principals face (Alliance, 2013; Walker & Smithgall, 2009). Principals that choose to commit themselves to effect positive change in some of the neediest neighborhoods and schools can find themselves receiving poor evaluations, placed on performance improvement plans, and counseled out of the principalship. This predicament can be predicated on the one-size-fits-all principal evaluation measure being used by most school districts. The corollary of principals in challenging schools being counseled out and having their reputations ruined discourage school leaders from serving some of the nation's neediest children. In addition, many tremendously talented school leaders can become disenchanted based on these working conditions and leave the profession altogether (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012; Johnson, 2005; Tyre, 2015).

Therefore, if the nations want to retain quality school leaders, improve and serve our neediest children, and create a fair and just school leader evaluation system, a more equitable principal evaluation system policy must be implemented. A principal evaluation policy that encourages individualization based on numerous factors can address this

equity issue. The policy could factor in poverty rates, mobility rates, initial culture and climate metrics, initial parental involvement rates, initial English language learners, and other unique school factors inclusive of student growth data.

Principal evaluation systems should equitably evaluate school principals and support their development in building the necessary leadership and managerial skills necessary to advance the nation's schools and children. Failing to do this means many challenging schools serving children will be unwanted by many talented school leaders because the children are deemed *unredeemable*. This will leave many children, mostly children of color, without the school leaders that could genuinely improve their school.

Policy Recommendation

The PERA Senate Bill 315, Public Act 96-086 was passed by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by former governor, Pat Quinn, in January 2010. It was followed by education reform legislation that took effect on June 13, 2011 and has been subsequently amended. The PERA requires that principals be evaluated by the district superintendent, the superintendent's designee, or an individual appointed by the school board holding an appropriate administrative license—in the case of CPS District 299, this would be the network chief.

This Policy Advocacy project advocates for a policy evaluating principals and assistant principals in CPS that is aligned to PERA and takes in to consideration schools in high-poverty communities. Implementing a policy that differentiates various schools could create an equitable process for evaluating principals. This process would encourage differentiation based on the uniqueness of school communities. Currently, the principal is evaluated by the network chief and the assistant principal is evaluated by the principal.

Both administrators are evaluated using the CPS Performance Standards for School Leaders. Administrators are evaluated in the following five areas found on the Knowledge Center via CPS' website (the Knowledge Center is a district resource for both teachers and administrators):

1. Competency A: Champions teacher and staff excellence through a focus on continuous improvement to develop and achieve the vision of high expectations for all students.
2. Competency B: Creates powerful professional learning systems that guarantee learning for all students.
3. Competency C: Builds culture focused on college and career readiness for all students.
4. Competency D: Empowers and motivates families and the community to become engaged.
5. Competency E: Relentlessly pursues self-disciplined thinking and action.

While the competencies are critical and capture many aspects of the principal's responsibilities, it does not take into consideration the principals who take the helm at *failing schools* that have been on a downward trajectory for years. This researcher wants to structure the policy to address the uniqueness of schools in underserved communities juxtaposed to schools in affluent communities.

Grappling with the idea of implementing a policy, creating guidelines, and framing a policy that considers individualization is exciting and indeed challenging. The opportunity to draft a policy that meets a threshold of providing differentiation and addresses the needs of numerous stakeholders holds a great deal of interest for me.

Teachers are held accountable and expected to differentiate the needs of their students to maximize their educational experience. In turn, it would make sense for principals to be evaluated based on a differentiated evaluation system.

Meeting the Problem

This program evaluation and change plan focused on progress monitoring. Research on progress monitoring has led this researcher to also reflect on the importance of the principal's role on student achievement and how principal evaluation policies focus the principal's impact. School improvement policies that suggest 50% of the principal's evaluation should be based on student achievement appears to suggest that the work of a school principal may be too narrow. School principals do not teach students but instead, create an environment conducive to student learning and development. This is demonstrated in more ways than just achievement. According to Horng and Loeb (2010), school leaders are pertinent to school success and contribute to positive school outcomes. School principals are a vital component in school improvement and students' academic successes. While teachers have a direct impact on student achievement, the school principal affects all students in a particular school. School leadership is the second most important factor that impacts students' achievements (Jacques, Clifford, & Hornung, 2012). A principal evaluation policy that promotes equity should evaluate school principals and support their development in building the necessary leadership and managerial skills necessary to advance the nation's schools and children.

The policy should seek to increase student learning, ensure schools add value to communities, implement sustainable school structures, improve teacher development, and retain high quality school leaders. The policy should be differentiated based on numerous

factors that impact a school's performance. District leaders would use a differentiated approach to evaluating school leaders and not succumb to political pressure to identify a scapegoat to satisfy the public need to believe improvement is happening—leaving students and families in worst situations. Some research suggests that students displaced by school closings attached to school reform were placed in schools not substantially better than the ones that closed. Principals must, of course, improve the lives of the neediest children. Therefore, advocating for a principal evaluation policy that promotes that ideology is the goal. The policy would address the uniqueness of this nation's communities, schools, families, and children. The differentiated policy would be designed with the city's uniqueness in mind and be applied by conscientious district leaders and school leaders. This policy would also differentiate the professional development principals need to build their capacity—a practice that could lead to school leaders becoming more capable of serving the diverse needs of students.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

In 2010, the PERA was signed into law requiring all schools in the state of Illinois to change how teachers' and principals' were evaluated. The PERA required all school districts to create and implement performance evaluation systems that measure teachers' and principals' professional skills as well as measuring students' academic growth. On January 17, 2013, CPS District 299 launched a principal evaluation system that holds principals accountable for student growth and provides support to help principals succeed as school leaders. This evaluation system assesses principals in two major areas: Principal Practice and Student Academic Growth and Other Measures.

According to CPS' website, principal practice consists of five competencies that assesses leadership excellence, such as maintaining powerful professional learning systems, building a culture focused on college and career readiness, and other factors that keep the focus on students. Student academic growth and other measures consist of student attendance data, student dropout rate, graduation information, as well as measures of student growth, such as the Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) and ACT Educational Planning and Assessment (EPAS).

Each principal receives two formal observations conducted by their network chief each school year. All CPS network chiefs are certified as principal evaluators by the Illinois State Board of Education. After the observations, evaluators provide feedback to and share collected evidence with principals. Each principal also has the opportunity to set goals with their network chief and submit a self-assessment.

Section Two of this Policy Advocacy paper focuses on how CPS could strengthen its implementation of their principal evaluation process. There are five disciplinary areas brought under analysis; each are analyzed separately:

1. Education
2. Economic
3. Social
4. Political
5. Moral and Ethical

Educational Analysis

Chicago Public School District 299 addresses principal quality throughout the school system by using the Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders to measure principal success. The Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders is divided into the following six standards:

- Living a Mission and Vision Focused on Results
- Leading and Managing Systems Change
- Improving Teaching and Learning
- Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships
- Leading with Integrity and Professionalism
- Creating and Sustaining a Culture of High Expectations

The district evaluates principals to ensure their accountability for student growth and achievement. This evaluation system reflects CPS' efforts to create an aligned evaluation system for all employees, according to CPS' Knowledge Center. However, the dynamics of the approximately 516 district-ran schools are quite different, and a one sizes

fits all evaluation structure is limited by the framework of the structures of the evaluation system.

School leadership, after instructional quality, is the most significant school-related contributor to what and how much students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). School leaders have the ability to design school environments that provide students the potent learning ingredients that should lead to students acquiring the skills needed to lead a rich and full life. School leaders hire personnel, schedule and program learning experiences, use data to align experiences to student's needs, among many other duties. Hiring a new principal can affect the vitality and student achievement rates of a school. Research indicates that school principals heavily influence teacher working conditions and affect the ability of districts to attract and retain talented teachers (DeAngelis, Peddle, & Trott, 2002; Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest, 2008).

For school districts to recruit and obtain quality principals in large urban school districts, a principal evaluation system that takes into account the specific dynamics of the district would increase the attractiveness of the principalship—thereby increasing the candidate pool. This increase in the candidate pool would most likely serve to attract some of the most highly qualified principals. This process would facilitate some of the highest qualified principals serving at some of the schools needing the most support. Higher qualified principals serving at some of the nation's most demanding schools would surely help to reduce the achievement, opportunity, and equality gaps. Principals create the conditions that encourage high-quality teaching and influence the retention of high-quality teachers in high needs schools. School leadership being a major influencer of school overall performance correlates directly to the level of implementation of the

five correlates of effective schools (Alvoid & Black, 2014, Clifford et al., 2012; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2013; Haller et al., 2016; Mitgang, 2013).

Economic Analysis

Academic achievement is often correlated to a person's economic wealth (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015). Economic status is usually considerably higher for college graduates than high school graduates. School leadership has a direct impact on the success rate of students attaining higher levels of education. High quality school leadership provides students learning experiences that affect students in more than one area. Quality school leadership develops students so that they can become highly productive citizens. Helping students increase their economic skills, awareness, and capacity so they can positively impact their families, communities, and the nation at large is a priority of the quality school leader.

Accordingly, it is paramount that school districts recruit, hire, retain, and support the brightest school leaders for some of our most challenging schools. A differentiated evaluation system could encourage school leaders to embrace the challenge of leading schools in high needs areas.

According to the American Educational Research Association (Fiester, 2013), a student who cannot read on grade level by the end of third grade is more likely to not graduate from high school on time and chances of succeeding economically later in life decreases. When adding low socioeconomic status (SES) to the equation, a student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his or her proficient, wealthier peers (Sparks, 2011). Implementing a differentiated evaluation system could encourage high quality principals to work in some of the neediest areas with the neediest students. Having high

quality principals in the schools with the greatest concerns could support greater learning for students—leading to more students on track to completing college. Statistics suggest that students who complete college lead a higher SES than those that do not. Therefore, it is imperative to attract, recruit, and retain high quality principals to direct the course for the neediest students. The practice of providing a less punitive evaluation system for taking on low-performance schools will support the hiring of high-performing principals informing the increased SES of minority students.

Social Analysis

The quality of life is impacted by student's educational background and attainment status. Horace Mann (as cited in Kober, 2007) suggested, "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery" (p. 11). The importance of an effective principal in a school is the second most impactful factor on student achievement—after a quality teacher (Jacques, Clifford, & Hornung, 2012). A study reported in *Education Next* suggests that the effects of highly effective principals on student achievement is equivalent to 2-7 months of additional learning each school year, while an ineffective principal can negatively impact student achievement by a comparable amount (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013).

Implementing a differentiated evaluation system for principals could potentially attract high quality principals to some of the lowest-performing schools and neediest children. A principal evaluation process that is intended to develop school leaders capable of meeting the needs of some of the nation's most challenging schools could truly have a positive impact on the academic achievement of some of the nation's most

vulnerable. Turnover in low-performing schools tends to be much higher than in higher-performing schools. As school leaders, principals influence student achievement in several ways: (a) establishing a mission and vision that motivates the entire community; (b) developing a school culture that supports teaching and learning; (c) ensuring resources are used effectively; and (d) engaging with the community (Burkhauser et al., 2012). An effective principal, in turn, recruits and retains the best teachers, establishes high expectations for all teachers, and implements structures for all students to be successful. The ripple effect produces a performing school, a thriving neighborhood, and productive citizens.

Promoting such a policy could be the difference in hiring and retaining an effective principal who affects dozens of teachers and thousands of students that can revitalize communities and make the world a better place. This policy could lead to greater retention of school leaders, thereby leading to greater school stability. Principal turnover might decrease and lessen the negative impact that unstable leadership has on school improvement. When a new school leader is hired, he or she often attempts to implement different systems, structures, and practices. These new systems can require a learning curve for effective implementation, leading to what some call implementation dips in student and staff performance. The stability of a school's leadership can promote consistent community partners, well established practices, stable relationships, and a vested calendar of events—all leading to systems that support students, families, and communities. Also, some school leaders are selective in identifying schools to lead and are only attracted to schools designated as performing schools. This can leave schools identified as underperforming limited in the quality candidates from which to select a

leader. A system that encourages our nation's best and brightest school leaders to serve only our privileged students, families, and communities might be seen as a disgrace in a country deemed the last super power. Implementing structures and systems that promote a more equitable educational experience for all the nation's children could lessen some of the social hardships that many students, families, and communities experience, as well as promote America as living up to its title of the last super power (Clifford et al., 2012).

Political Analysis

On April 26, 1983, former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, stood before the country at the White House and held up a report titled, *A Nation at Risk*. This 36-page document lambasted the state of America's school system and called for a host of much-needed reforms to correct the failing direction that public education was headed. Numerous policies were crafted by state and local governments based on this report (Vinovskis, 2015). Principal evaluation systems can serve as a conduit to ensure that all students attend high-quality schools with the most effective principals.

Updated principal evaluation systems were designed, adjusted, and implemented based on state laws. In 2012, the PERA was implemented as state law in Illinois. The PERA required all schools in Illinois to change how teachers and principals' performance were measured. For example, principal evaluations would be required to incorporate student achievement growth as a significant factor and the state board developed a model principal evaluation plan that school districts could choose to use. Principals have to be evaluated based on standards of effective practice that include clear descriptions of what excellent school leadership means. The policy has the opportunity to further develop the principal evaluation practices to differentiate the tool to a greater degree, thereby

encouraging school principals to not be frightened off by opportunities to become principals in high-needs communities.

Current principal evaluation practices operate on a one-size-fits-all premise. This prevailing assertion encourages principals to covet what is considered performing schools to serve as principal, leaving underperforming schools attractive to principals not considered to be high performers. The creation of this political paradigm that supports “performing schools” continuing to perform and “failing school’ continuing to fail. Leveling the principal performance evaluation could provide incentives for school leaders to serve in neighborhoods that they are passionate about. This could then create a political shift by making these neighborhoods politically vibrant again. It is suggested that strong schools create strong communities. This being a premise would encourage all true patriots to invest in.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

School leadership for the 21st century must be grounded in moral and ethical behaviors that serve all the nation’s children. However, a challenge can be school leaders applying this moral and ethical behavior to all the nation’s children by ensuring children receive the high-quality education this nation can provide. It could be seen as a moral and ethical disgrace for a nation as wealthy as the United States to provide an education to a large percentage of its citizenry that some consider woefully inadequate. By not ensuring that all students have access to the high quality education and school leaders that other students have access to does seem to bring into question the moral and ethical practices of those leading our nation’s schools.

Chicago is divided into 77 diverse neighborhoods and 670 schools under the umbrella of CPS District 299. While the demographic makeup of each of the schools and neighborhoods are different, the accountability metrics for principals remain the same. According to CPS' website, 86% of their students are considered economically disadvantaged. According to Ann Owens (2016), income segregation is higher for families with children in Chicago than most United States urban centers.

This paper addresses the need to implement a policy to differentiate the evaluation systems for principals in CPS District 299—the third largest school district in the United States (Fryer, 2011). This school district is responsible for educating approximately 400,000 students. The schools these students attend can vary dramatically based on their geographical locations across the 77 neighborhoods in Chicago. These variances can be as a result of: a) students entering school substantially behind, b) high-poverty rates, c) the quality of teachers, and d) a lack of effective leadership. Therefore, the evaluation systems should be varied, based on the differences each school presents.

A large part of principals' evaluation is student growth. Elementary school principals are measured using student growth on the NWEA MAP and high school principals using the EPAS. A differentiated evaluation system would support a more ethical evaluation structure. School principals that contend with high levels of poverty should not have their benchmarks similar to schools that serve a zero level of poverty students. It appears to be ethically unjust to suggest that all schools are alike because all students are not alike. School districts have seen an alarming number of principals from high-poverty schools reprimanded for low performance while few to no principals from low-poverty schools have been reprimanded for low performance. School principals in

urban areas normally serving high-poverty students are most likely to be minority. This adds an additional dimension to the reprimanding of school leaders. This practice leads to a reduction in the number of employed minority school leaders.

This presents an ethical challenge school districts must address. A principal evaluation system that accounts for and adjusts based on the diversity of the community could, to some degree, address this concern. These unjust structures penalize minority school principals for attempting to address real needs in their community, prompting them to abandon the neediest communities in search of a more favorable environment.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

School reform initiatives continue to be implemented to address the unabating regression of student achievement in American schools—especially in minority communities. Much research suggests that a vital factor in student and school success is the leadership of an effective principal (Condon & Clifford, 2012). No Child Left Behind stimulated the replacement of the principal in consistently low-performing schools, and the Obama administration made it a requirement for schools undergoing federally-funded turnarounds (Branch et al., 2013). The ESSA implements principal evaluation reforms that outline standards for principal performance and holds principals accountable for school improvement in numerous areas.

In the nation’s attempts to quantify principal performance, evaluation models have been crafted that are not designed to attach principals to some of the nation’s neediest schools and children. Prevailing principal evaluation expectations can be a deterrent to high-performing principals becoming school leaders at schools designated as failing. School leaders and politicians must design policies and legislation that promote school leaders providing service to the neediest children, schools, and communities if America is to live up to its creed of allowing its least the ideas outlined in the Constitution of the United States of America.

Section Three explains what this proposed policy advocates, in addition to its goal and objectives. The questions being explored follow:

1. What are the policy’s goals and objectives?

2. Whose needs, values, and preferences are being represented by the policy advocated?
3. On what basis are the goals and objectives validated to be appropriate and good?

Policy Goals and Objectives

Strong leadership, in the form of an effective principal, is essential for cultivating high-performing schools that attract and retain high-quality educators, as well as for building community support for education efforts (Clifford et al., 2012). There appears to be a direct correlation between principal capacity, student achievement, and school performance. It would stand to reason that the nation's neediest students, schools, and communities would benefit the greatest from principals that exhibited the highest professional capacity. The goal of this policy involves creating avenues that encourage school leaders (ones with the greatest leadership ability) to commit themselves to those students who need them the most. A principal evaluation system that is differentiated to account for the varying diversity of schools in urban school districts, specifically CPS District 299, can be beneficial. To improve education in urban schools, districts must ensure that they retain high-quality principals. This policy would support the district's capacity in hiring and retaining high-quality principals for its neediest schools. According to Mitgang (2013), solid leadership is a prerequisite for improving failing and poor neighborhood schools.

Needs, Values, and Preferences

Implementing principal evaluation systems that clearly identify effective school principals and provide performance-based feedback to promote improvement can help

ensure that all students attend schools that can support their achievements. It is the school principal's job to ensure that every child has access to high-quality instruction taught by high-quality teachers. Research suggests that leadership is the second most important factor impacting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). A principal evaluation system that does not penalize school leaders for choosing to lead underperforming schools would benefit school leaders, students, families, neighborhoods, and cities alike. Students would benefit from having the high quality school leaders research suggests are needed to lead high-needs schools.

Every child residing in Chicago has access to a neighborhood school. Each of these neighborhood schools has an attendance boundary and all students within that attendance boundary may attend that school. The socioeconomic status (SES) of a neighborhood drives the unique concerns that can vary dramatically from neighborhood to neighborhood. These urban schools share some unique physical and demographic characteristics that differentiate them from suburban and rural school districts (Byrk, 2010). In 2012, 75% of the students at the lowest-performing schools in Chicago failed to meet standards of the state's high-stakes assessment, more than 20% of the students in elementary schools scored in the warning range in Reading, and nearly half of the students at these low performing schools scored in the warning range in Math (Dwyer, 2013). This large percentage of Americans desire and deserve the promise of a free and appropriate education that affords them the ability to pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The implementation of a differentiated principal evaluation policy would promote the recruitment of high-quality principals to schools needing their leadership the most.

This policy would be outlined to consider the attributes of a school's diversity and the heavy lifts unique to individual schools. Socioeconomic factors that can have a tremendous positive and/or negative impact on students' ability to achieve would be considered in developing the policy as well. Circumstances that affect students' attendance might be given credence as a point of contention to be vetted for adjustment based on a school's history. The idea of comparing schools to other schools may be vetted and adjusted to support a policy to buttress a differentiated principal evaluation process. These ideas could encourage a principal evaluation policy that increases the number of high-quality school leaders leading our nation's schools with the highest needs.

A policy shift from a *one-size-fits-all* or a *one-sizes-fits-similar* principal evaluation policy appears to be needed if the goal is to attract the most highly-qualified leaders to serve America's most neediest students. School leaders must feel they will not be penalized for choosing to serve students in need. A differentiated principal evaluation policy could lend itself to providing school leaders the latitude and level of comfort that could save society from a plethora of concerns that are weakening the nation at large.

Goals and Objectives—Appropriate and Good

Federal, state, and local governments have continuously enacted policies to affect positive change in our nation's educational institutions. Many families have abandoned urban schools to the peril of the larger community. Conditions such as these have spurred the need to recruit and retain high quality school leaders to serve students that appear to be abandoned because of their consistent underperformance, dilapidated facilities, outdated resources, and underqualified staff. The idea that a high quality school leader

could improve student performance when faced with these conditions appears daunting. However, research suggests that leadership is the second most important factor impacting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

School districts must ensure that all schools are led by the high quality leaders necessary to provide children the promise of an education that would afford them the opportunity to live a better life. The implementation of a differentiated principal evaluation policy seems to support this idea. The creation of this differentiated system would encourage principals to consider leading some of the nation's *challenging* schools. More high-quality principals would be leading schools with the highest need for them. This policy could reduce the need for turnaround schools and principals designated as *Turnaround Principals*.

This policy could help to stabilize communities and make them more vibrant contributing members of the society. A differentiated principal evaluation policy could lessen the need to the expansion of other options to address the need of current school failure. We know that many families choose a neighborhood based on the quality of the school. Corollary this policy to lead to families choosing neighborhoods that had lost some of their appeal.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

Looking at the pros and cons of a new policy is a vital step before the implementation phase. Browder (1995) defined a policy argument as the “pro-and-con essay on the merit of the advocated policy, considering research findings, public and professional opinions if they exist, and any factors that appear relevant to the situation” (p. 59). This section presents the pros and cons of the merit of this advocated policy, reviews the research, and presents professional opinions.

Pros of the Policy

Strong instructional leadership is essential for a school’s success. Research suggests that leadership is the second most important factor impacting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). While teachers have a direct impact on student achievement inside their classrooms, principals impact an entire school (Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh, 2009). According to researchers from the University of Minnesota, there has not been a single case of schools improving its student achievement without an effective leader (Mitgang, 2013). The neediest children, most times attending low-performing schools, benefit from having better school leadership. Poor and minority children do not underperform only because they are behind, but because they are shortchanged from a high-quality education (Peske & Haycock, 2006).

Differentiating the way principals are evaluated in urban school districts, specifically CPS District 299, could potentially attract highly-qualified principals to low-performing schools. This policy could create a corollary effect by providing these high-quality principals to schools and children whom research suggested would benefit from

high-quality leadership the most (Branch et al., 2013; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004).

In the city of Chicago, schools labeled as underperforming are disproportionately located in disadvantaged areas and tend to affect predominantly African American and Hispanic students. According to CPS' website data, 80% of district students are classified as economically disadvantaged; the district is comprised of predominantly African Americans (38%) and Hispanic (47%) students (http://www.cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_and_facts.aspx retrieved 9/12/16). These schools may have limited resources, subpar facilities, insufficient supplies, and employ fewer well-qualified teachers than other schools in better neighborhoods. Also, these schools tend to have greater concerns pertaining to attendance, student mobility, student discipline problems, and student achievement.

Differentiating the evaluation metrics for principals who choose to lead these schools could expand the pool of highly-qualified candidates who may apply—thereby lessening the likelihood that some of these school would be labeled as underperforming. Attaching highly-qualified principals could help to stabilize schools and therefore neighborhoods, leading to more vibrant cities. The impact on neighborhoods when a proven school leader is guiding a school can be tremendous. Employing this strategy could lessen the number of schools designated as underperforming and diminish the number of students identified as disadvantaged.

Tzeggai (2016) reports that about 40% of CPS elementary school students and 66% of CPS high school students opted out of their neighborhood schools for other choices in 2014; the numbers are significantly higher for African American students.

School leaders can be a catalyst for retaining and attracting students to neighborhood schools. However, school leaders and politicians must first create a system that attaches these dynamic school leaders to what some people may consider to be unattractive schools. A policy that encourages principals to not turn away from the challenges of leading urban schools based on how school leaders are evaluated could have a positive impact on their choice to serve high-needs schools and districts.

Differentiating the ways principals are evaluated in these schools could attract highly-qualified leadership, which could have a tremendous impact on student learning through the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers, and how they create opportunities for teachers to improve (Horng & Loeb, 2010). A Wallace Foundation report concluded that CPS has as few as two applicants apply for some of the most challenging schools in the district, as compared to as many as one hundred applicants for higher-achieving schools (Mitgang, 2013). Mitgang's (2013) research appears to support the need for systems that encourage high-performing school leaders to take the helm of high-needs schools to encourage parents and students to look at these schools as viable options, thereby promoting the vibrancy of many neighborhoods.

Stanford University research concluded that schools demonstrating growth in student achievement are more likely to have principals who are strong organizational managers (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Strong organizational managers are effective at hiring and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources, and maintaining positive working and learning environments. It stands to reason that if schools that demonstrate growth in student achievement are more likely to have strong organizational managers, then society

should want these school leaders guiding the neediest schools and children. The neediest students need the most support and growth because they are normally the furthest behind. A policy that encourages a differentiated evaluation system would lend itself to providing a high-quality principal in every school in every neighborhood—as the Stanford University research suggested.

Chicago Public School District 299 has implemented various turnaround efforts, like many other underperforming school districts throughout the United States, to improve poor-performing schools rendering various results (Grant, Floch Arcello, Konrad, Swenson, 2014). Research suggested that minimal improvements have been made by reform efforts, such as school restructuring, reconstitution, school size reduction, and various aspects of the former NCLB legislation (Smarick, 2010). Reforms may falter for a plethora of reasons; however, as stated in most research, leadership has a great impact on school progress. Research is interpreted to vociferously support a process that fosters placing high-quality school leaders in the schools with the greatest need and not penalize them for their efforts. This policy could very well lessen the number of schools slated for turnaround.

According to De la Torre, Gordon, Moore, and Cowey (2015), in May 2013, the Chicago Board of Education voted to close 49 elementary schools. Many of these schools were slated to close for either poor performance, low building utilization, and poor educational environments (De la Torre et al., 2015). Many of these school closings were concentrated in depopulated neighborhoods in the South and West sides of the city—in neighborhoods already grappling with very high levels of poverty, crime, and unemployment and primarily impacted predominately African American and Hispanic

children. I often ask myself, *Which came first, a failing neighborhood, or a failing school?* If I think a failing school came first, what measures could have improved the odds of the neighborhood being more successful? Successful schools are associated with successful neighborhoods. Evidently, successful schools are associated with successful school leaders. Encouraging successful leaders to take on schools in need by using a differentiated approach to their evaluations would likely promote the need to close fewer schools, thereby bolstering neighborhoods, communities, cities, and states. This process would stimulate economic and political empowerment and growth.

According to the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University, policymakers failed to adequately support and provide the unique professional development required for the uniqueness of schools (Haller et al., 2016). This policy would provide funding and stipulations to get principals to fit the individual needs.

Counter Argument of the Policy

Chicago Public Schools implemented the principal eligibility process to identify highly-qualified, successful leaders for all of its schools. Through this two-part process, applicants must demonstrate evidence of leadership experience related to the CPS principal competencies found in the CPS Performance Standards for School Leaders. This rigorous process requires applicants to demonstrate school-wide leadership experiences that have resulted in positive student outcomes across multiple grade levels and subject areas. One can argue that the district has put measures in place to recruit talented principal leadership. Aspiring principals currently working in the district feel that the process is rigorous. However, they do not feel that the experiences prepare them for

the role of school leader. In turn, they must enroll and engage in additional leadership experiences to garner this knowledge and expertise to support their performance in most urban schools. This purported rigorous process could be juxtaposed to a differentiated principal evaluation process to retain viable candidates for all schools within the district. The process does not seem to account for the differentiated needs and experiences principals will encounter in the myriad of schools that make up the educational landscape.

All schools deserve high-quality school leaders and should be allowed to attract the leaders based on the desirability of the school. Some communities have created extremely productive neighborhoods where the school is integrated with churches, businesses, homes, and parks and recreations (Blank et al., 2016). The median income for the families and the extracurriculum offerings afforded to affluent children are more likely to expedite their academic, emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth. School leaders may feel that children from these communities are similar to themselves and easier to relate to because of similar socioeconomic status. Further, some may reason that because of the public taxes provided by these families, they are entitled to the premium school leader at the expense of those that provide less or no taxes to support the education system. These wealthier neighborhoods collect more property taxes, which leads to better schools and more resources, which leads to better student performance. Some may conclude that a principal evaluation system that promotes school leaders being attracted to the true calling of education (to increase a person's humanity), would be unfair to those that contribute the most. Some members of society could argue this type

of evaluation process could be seen as unequal to some affluent students by encouraging high-quality school leaders to consider low-performing schools and students.

Chicago Public School District 299 receives Title I funds. The primary purpose of Title I, the single largest financial source of federal support from the government, involves ensuring that all children are given the opportunity to be provided a high-quality education and to offer an equitable educational experience (Thomas & Brady, 2005). School districts that have the most children from families with low-incomes receive the most federal Title I money. School populations must have a child poverty rate of at least 40% to run a school-wide Title I program. Title I funding is meant to help students who are at risk of falling behind academically by providing a more equitable educational experience. As a prerequisite of receiving Title I funds, school districts must demonstrate that academic expectations, learning goals, and curriculum opportunities were the same for students eligible for these funds as they were for all other students (McDonnell, 2005). Since most CPS schools receive these federal dollars, they must abide by the accountability stipulations that demonstrate student academic success and the hiring of high-quality staff. One might argue that schools receive additional funds to provide an equitable education for the neediest children, and thereby these funds account for the differentiated needs of schools. While these funds support some equity in school funding, they do not seem to attract high-quality school leaders to the nation's neediest schools.

Over the past decade, many organizations and foundations have invested large amounts of money to support groups to prepare principals for challenging leadership positions. One of these groups is New Leaders for New Schools—a national nonprofit organization committed to improving education for children by attracting and preparing

principals for the neediest schools (Branch et al., 2013). New Leaders for New Schools uses its program to generate evidence, resources, and policy recommendations to help partner states, school districts, and schools improve student achievement. In 2009, New Leaders for New Schools won the Innovations in American Government Award for its partnership with CPS where 120 New Leader's principals support the academic achievement of nearly 50,000 students. It could be argued that programs such as New Leaders for New Schools attracts high caliber leaders from both academic and corporate sectors to lead underserved and underperforming urban schools. Recruiting and retaining principals from this program could provide these leaders the tools they need to be successful in improving student achievement.

Given the connection between an effective school principal and student achievement, one might surmise that a key factor in improving a school would be to utilize leaders from program such as New Leaders for New Schools. While this premise seems reasonable, it does not negate the fact that schools are different and the experiences encountered by school leaders will depend on the socioeconomic status of the school community and the vestedness of the political elite. These factors lend credibility to the idea that while school leaders can receive tremendous training, leading some of our more challenging schools requires not only high-quality training but an equitable evaluation process based on numerous factors. While these factors may be similar in all schools, the degree is most likely different in all schools and therefore, should be accounted for in a principal evaluation process.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This section makes the case for implementation of a policy that differentiates the evaluations for principals who work for CPS District 299, as well as create what the plan would entail. Implementing a policy, as such, could reduce the need for implementing turnarounds—reducing the amount of charter schools opening and increasing the candidate pool for highly-qualified principals. Creating a policy to implement a better evaluation system for principals in Chicago requires cooperation and effort from multiple stakeholders—with principals from the neediest schools being included at the table. The implementation plan will be comprised of the following components:

1. Aligning the policy to PERA (*Performance Evaluation Reform Act*)
2. Differentiating the student growth component
3. Creating principal evaluation categories

Aligning the Policy to PERA

The PERA requires an evaluation of professional practice as one input to the overall summative performance rating for principals and assistant principals in Illinois. Under PERA, the principal evaluation system must be standards-based and include student growth indicators, as well as professional practice ratings. The current principal evaluation system utilized by CPS District 299 includes five competencies:

1. Champions teacher and staff excellence through continuous improvement to develop and achieve the vision of high expectations for all students.
2. Creates powerful professional learning systems that guarantee learning for all students.
3. Builds a culture focused on college and career readiness.

4. Empowers and motivates families and the community to become engaged.
5. Relentlessly pursues self-disciplined thinking and action.

(<http://cps.edu/principalevaluation/Pages/PrincipalPractice.aspx>)

This new policy will continue to include these competencies, satisfying the principal practice component of PERA.

Differentiating the Student Growth Component

The student growth and other measures of the policy will be a focus for differentiation. According to the United States Department of Education, CPS District 299 is the third largest district in the United States behind Los Angeles' Unified School District and the Puerto Rico School District. Within CPS District 299, over 600 schools exist serving approximately 390,000 students. The various schools within the district vary drastically in racial makeup, socioeconomic status (SES), student achievement levels, and other factors indicative of a school's diversity. Schools situated in the city's most impoverished areas are confronted with numerous obstacles in which schools in more affluent neighborhoods do not have to grapple. Therefore, the principal evaluation system has to account for the discrepancies between these very diverse schools. The evaluation system could be progressed, based on the school's current data points. Another suggestion might be to evaluate schools based on categories.

Creating Principal Evaluation Categories

I advocate for a policy that will include a differentiated student growth component. This policy will create a more equitable evaluation system to support, hire, and retain effective leadership in every school in Chicago. Creating a policy to support the implementation of a principal evaluation system designed to provide all students the

high-quality education they deserve is a critical tool for building equity in the education children receive in every school in CPS District 299. Schools could be divided into categories based on their uniqueness. There appears to be three unique characteristics of schools in CPS District 299. However, the categories might be adjusted based on additional considerations. The higher a school's academic performance level designation, the higher the academic performance expectation should be leveled on the school.

I propose a policy that divides the schools into three categories (see Table 1):

- Category 1 Schools could consist of gifted centers, classical schools, and academic centers. Gifted centers are defined as schools with programs for academically-advanced children and can cover the entire school or be a separate program within school (Allensworth & Rosenkranz, 2000). Classical schools provide programs for academically-advanced children in Grades K–6 with a challenging liberal arts course of instruction (Allensworth & Rosenkranz, 2000). Academic Centers provide programs in select high schools that can be considered as an extension of the classical schools for students in Grades 7 and 8. Category 1 schools have an online application process in which students can enter through lottery or assessment.

Students attending schools classified in Category 1 most often are cared for by highly engaged middle-to-upper-middle income parents. They are less likely to contend with many of the social ills that plague less affluent communities. Many students attending these schools have a demonstrated intelligence quotient that falls in the above average to gifted

range. These students receive numerous extended learning experiences regularly and wrap-around services are provided by conscientious caregivers as required. The educational attainment level of these student's parents is often college and above. The curriculum provided to students in this category is often accelerated and the scope of the curriculum is often deep. Students experience vast subjects—often aligned to accelerated high school entrance examinations. Parents often provide extended learning opportunities to guarantee students capacity in the classroom.

- Category 2 Schools could consist of magnet schools and the neighborhood schools housed in more affluent areas across the city (Allensworth & Rosenkranz, 2000). While some schools in this category are not affluent areas, the students residing in that neighborhood are not allowed automatic entry. Magnet schools specialize in specific subject areas, such as math and science, fine arts, world language, or humanities. These schools accept students from throughout the city through a computerized lottery and application process. Neighborhood schools are the first option for every child who lives in Chicago. Schools in this category serve all students who live within a designated attendance boundary of a particular school. Students in attendance at these schools are most often cared for by lower-middle to middle-class parents who are engaged in their student's daily lives. Most student's basic needs are met, and on many occasions, exceeded. Students receive extended learning experiences often and wrap-around services are provided in a thoughtful way. The educational

attainment level of these student's parents is often high school graduate, some college, trade, technical, or service training. Curriculum provided to students is most often grade level and extended based on magnet area. The scope of the curriculum is wider than schools in Category 3.

- Category 3 Schools could consist of neighborhood schools that are designated as poor-performing schools in economically disadvantaged communities throughout Chicago. These schools serve the neediest students across the city in the poorest communities and have high teacher and administrative turnover. Students that attend these schools most often are cared for by absentee parents living on some kind of governmental assistance. These students are more likely to contend with many of the social ills that plague socially-disadvantaged communities. Some students have experienced trauma that is not recognized by their caregiver. Many students attending these schools have been identified as exhibiting some antisocial behavior, academic deficiency, or other behavior that would impede their learning. Students receive limited extended learning experiences, and wrap-around services are provided by a social agency *rarely*. The educational attainment level of student's parents is often middle school and/or a few high school graduates. Student's curricula offerings are often remedial and limited in subject and scope.

Table 1

Three Proposed School Categories, Rubric, and Measures

School	Rubric	Other Measures
<p>Category 1 These schools are designed for academically advanced students and testing is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted Centers • Classical School • Academic Centers 	<p>Rubric 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Growth on Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) • Attendance • Growth of priority groups on NWEA MAP: English learners (EL), diverse learners (students with an IEP), and African American and Latino students • Percentage of students meeting/exceeding national growth on NWEA • English learners’ development on assessing comprehension and communication in English state-to-state (ACCESS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students exceeding standards • Percentage of students that meet growth targets set scientifically • Percentage of students performing in the gifted range on an intelligence assessment • Yearly student attendance numbers based on a certain percentage aligned to the SES of the student population • An increase in other factors that are scientifically indicative of enhancing the performance of students served
<p>This policy would allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for additional resources for gifted and talented students. • Professional Development aligned to working with gifted and talented students. • Removal of measures that don’t affect students in this demographic, such as medical compliance. • To focus on other factors that are scientifically indicative of enhancing the performance of students served. 		

<p>Category 2 Magnet schools do not have neighborhood attendance boundaries. Seats are filled through the application and computerized lottery selection process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnet Schools • Neighborhood Schools in more affluent areas 	<p>Rubric 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student growth on Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) • Attendance • Growth of Priority Groups on NWEA MAP: English Learners (EL), Diverse Learners (students with an IEP), and African American and Latino Students • Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding National Growth on NWEA • English Learners' (EL) Development on Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students growing in relationship to learning standards expectations based on previous performance levels • Percentage of students that meet growth targets set scientifically • Percentage of students performing in the average and above range on an intelligence assessment • Yearly student attendance numbers based on a certain percentage aligned to the socioeconomic status of the student population • An increase in other factors that are scientifically indicative of enhancing the performance of students served
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<p>Category 3</p> <p>Schools within the attendance boundary that all students in that neighborhood are eligible to attend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Schools • Open Enrollment Schools 	<p>Rubric 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Growth on Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) • Attendance • Growth of Priority Groups on NWEA MAP: English Learners (EL), Diverse Learners (students with an IEP), and African American and Latino Students • Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding National Growth on NWEA • English Learners' (EL) Development on Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students growing in relationship to learning standards expectations based on previous performance levels with some consideration based on socioeconomic factors impacting the school • Percentage of students that meet growth targets set scientifically with some consideration based on socioeconomic factors impacting the school • Percentage of students performing in the average and above range on an intelligence assessment with some consideration based on socioeconomic factors impacting the school • Yearly student attendance numbers based on a certain percentage of current attendance and aligned to socioeconomic factors facing the school • An increase in other factors that are scientifically indicative of enhancing the performance of students that are socially and economically disadvantaged
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This policy would allow:

- Principals that have demonstrative capacity to receive signing incentives for taking on Category 2 and 3 schools.
- Pipelines from top universities with the best educational leadership programs to take on some of the most challenging schools in Chicago.
- Principals to receive additional funds to promote student attendance in Category 3 schools.
- Principals to be mentored by other successful principals within the district.
- Principals to receive individualized professional development to enhance their performance in their current capacity.
- Principals to receive support and additional resources in hiring and retaining high-quality staff and a pipeline to top universities.
- Principals to be on a 5-year track, as long as they make yearly benchmark goals and fulfill noninstructional responsibilities aligned to their differentiated evaluation.
- Principals to receive wrap-around support based on scientific research suggestions for enhancing low socioeconomic student's performance.
- Principals would receive additional funding to provide professional development to school staff to promote their ability to serve students from socially disadvantaged communities.
- Principals would receive additional resources to combat the social malaise that affect their communities.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

The policy assessment plan will progress monitor and evaluate its impact on student achievement, increased community engagement, and a principal's capacity to serve children from the spectrum of schools that are representative of the district (upon its implementation). The assessment plan also describes how the policy will be monitored, what stakeholders will be held accountable for implementation of the policy, and what report procedures will be followed. If this advocated policy is adopted, CPS District 299 will have to ensure all principals, assistant principals, network chiefs, deputy chiefs, local school council (LSC) members, and other administrators are trained not just for compliance but for the intent of the policy. All members of the district should have some understanding of the principal evaluation process in order for the policy to have the designed impact of advancing the districts' purpose. The primary components are:

- Establishing an Administrator's Evaluation Executive Board (AEEB)
- District Training
- Implementation Roll Out
- Monitoring Implementation

Establishing an Administrator's Evaluation Executive Board

Chicago Public School District 299 is the third largest school district in the United States and is responsible for educating approximately 400,000 students (Fryer, 2011). According to information provided on CPS' website, there are 511 principals and, assuming each principal has at least one assistant principal, approximately 500 assistant principals (http://www.cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_and_facts.aspx).

Further, each CPS is governed by a LSC comprised of parents, community members, school staff, and in some cases, students. This means there are over 1,000 school leaders that need to be evaluated yearly. To determine which rubric would be used for each school, an AEEB would be created consisting of principals, assistant principals, chiefs, deputy chiefs, LSC members, and other district-level representatives. This board would be tasked with establishing and assigning the criteria that would be used to evaluate each school principal—based on the category of the school using statistical analysis of the school based on specific demographic information.

The AEEB would categorize each of the schools into the three distinct categories outlined in Section Three. The board would review the school's demographic data yearly to ensure the data is categorized correctly based on distinguishing factors that support the school being listed in one category or another. In addition, the board will continue to work with the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure that the policy is aligned to PERA. Principals would be able to petition to the AEEB if they feel they are not placed in the correct category. The AEEB members will be nominated by their colleagues and must hold membership in professional leadership organizations—including the NAESP, the NASSP, the National Association of School Superintendents (NASS), or the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Membership in one or more of these organizations would provide board members access to current policy as well as to be informed on pertinent educational leadership information. Board members (except LSC members), would also have served as a principal for at least 5 years and demonstrated a successful track record. The AEEB members would attend conferences yearly (with other states) to study best practices and other districts with effective

principal evaluation practices. The position of AEEB member would be an integral component of the principal evaluation process in the district. This board would not just support the differentiation of principal's evaluation, but also the retention, recruitment, and development of district principals.

District Training

To promote systemic implementation of the policy appropriately, professional development that sustains practices will need to occur. Professional development that integrates content and pedagogy; is coherence with standards and policies; provides active learning opportunities; provide mentoring, coaching, apprenticing; and individual learning will promote greater likelihood that the policy will have the intended impact. District training will be provided using a blended model. A portion of the training will be provided face to face, with the other portion being web-based. Training will be provided for network chiefs, deputy chiefs, principals, assistant principals, other district administrators, and members of LSCs.

These school administrators will form Leadership Practice Communities (LPC) to develop their capacity to use and implement the new evaluation tool (Wagner et al., 2012). The LPC could be used to form clusters to work through modules, identify best practices, generate a greater understanding, and develop ownership of the policy. All stakeholders would be required to successfully pass a final assessment suggesting their capacity to support the implementation of the evaluation policy.

The web-based portion would consist of 10 modules that would take 60 to 90 minutes per module to complete. Use of the web-based format allows for quick dissemination of materials and can be more cost-efficient. Modules would support the

differentiated shift mindset needed by school administrators to buttress the change in principal evaluation. Stakeholders would be trained on school categories, data metrics, demographic factors, as well as ways to encourage school growth. Modules for network and deputy chiefs would provide high-quality professional development on the unique characteristics of the three categories that schools would be clustered in, practices for leading teaching and learning in each of the unique categories, strategies and exemplars for coaching administrators in each of the clusters and videos modeling reflective conversations with principals and assistant principals. Deputy and network chiefs will have to be trained and be able to evaluate principals and assistant principals in all three categories.

The face to face portion would provide safe places for cohorts to generate discussions around teaching and learning in each unique category setting, challenges with the evaluation tool, and implementing the evaluation tool to support the hiring and retaining of the best school leaders for every school in the district.

Implementation Rollout

The full implementation of the new Principal Evaluation will take 5 years to completely implement in every school in Chicago District 299. This roll out will consist of 4 years, with an initial year consisting of a pilot in 25 schools—including 4 high schools and 21 elementary schools. The AEEB will create a rubric to determine which schools will be considered potential sites for the Stage 1 Pilot. All schools that meet the criteria will be given an opportunity to apply.

All network and deputy chiefs will begin their training during the pilot and will be required to clock observation hours in 1 of the 25 schools. Principals and assistant

principals will be divided into six cohorts each for a total of 12. Each cohort will consist of 200 administrators. The district will pay for all initial training and provide materials to all participants. The district will only assume financial responsibility for the first assessment. If administrators are not successful on the first round, they would be responsible for any additional tries. Administrators would also be responsible for registering their certificates with the Illinois State Board of Education.

After the AEEB selects the 25 schools, the principals and assistant principals will be notified and given a calendar of professional development dates, a commitment letter explaining what the first year entails, a password, and login information for web-based modules.

The professional development will include trainings during the summer as well as during the school year. Principals and assistant principals will all be assigned mentors to support leadership growth, reflective practices, and strategies to support transformational learning (Drago-Severson, 2009). Principals, assistant principals, and other administrators will work in Professional Learning Committees (PLCs) to advance the policy and develop practices that will support its full implementation. Professional Learning Committees will be designed based on likenesses of schools. However, PLCs will also function from a diverse grouping to strengthen the learning of those using the policy. Professional Learning Committees would be expected to meet regularly, share expertise, and work collaboratively to appropriately implement the policy.

Monitoring Implementation

Monitoring the appropriate implementation of the policy will be an integral component of ensuring the policy has the intended effect. Therefore, the steps taken will be articulated and shared with all stakeholders, as well as reiterated throughout the process. Stakeholders working as teams must work together with their varying perspectives to navigate through the implementation (Wagner et al., 2006). Monitoring the implementation of the Principal Evaluation policy will be led by the AEEB and aligned to current practices and PERA. There will be four distinct phases of the monitoring process. The phases will include the *solidifying of the policy* phase, the *training of all stakeholders* phase, the *policy implementation* phase, and the *evaluation of the policies affect* stage. Articulating monitoring in phases can support course-correcting in a more strategic fashion by allowing for real-time feedback from the administrators affected by the policy. This practice should support more sustainable implementation. Regular updates on the progress and phases will be made to district stakeholders during Board of Education and administrator's meetings and shared with the public to garner support from the larger community. The AEEB will be expected to see to the policy being fully enacted. However, the whole school community should have a vested interest in implementing a policy that helps provide a high-quality principal in schools that have the highest need.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

Horace Mann suggested, “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (as cited in Kober, 2007, p. 11). Therefore, it stands to reason that in a nation as advanced as ours, the citizenry would expect that all students are afforded an education that supports their ability to be on equal footing with others. Second, to classroom instruction, the most important factor that advances student achievement is high-quality school leadership (Clifford & Ross, 2011; Condon & Clifford, 2012; Mitgang, 2013; Shelton, 2010).

Research seems to suggest that if state governments want student achievement to reach expected levels then it is imperative to ensure that each student, school, and community is provided high-quality school leaderships (Clifford & Ross, 2012). Current principal evaluation structures appear to discourage performing principals from becoming school leaders at schools designated as underperforming. Principals that choose to lead schools specified as failing often have to contend with numerous socioeconomic factors that negatively impact student achievement, student’s social and emotional well-being, school’s culture and climate, teacher efficacy, as well as the communities’ stress levels.

Appropriate and Best Policy

A policy that encourages and promotes high-quality principals leading some of our nation’s most challenging schools would be a huge benefit to our students, families, communities, municipalities, and nation at large (Clifford & Ross, 2012). It stands to reason our neediest schools would need the best and brightest leaders if they are to impact student learning as required to decrease achievement as well as opportunity gaps

for our students. Often, principals serving the neediest students are blamed too for the social ills of the community in which their schools are located. These school principals are oftentimes given poor evaluations that, in some cases, are more associated with the ills of the community and not the capacity of the school leader.

A policy that promotes principals working in affluent neighborhoods receiving some of the highest evaluations and principals serving the neediest students receiving some of the lowest evaluations could discourage principals from choosing to serve students from disadvantaged communities. A principal evaluation policy that is differentiated by considering some of the communities' uniqueness and social conditions that impact school achievement could encourage high-quality school principals to lead schools labeled as failing.

Differentiating the current Principal Evaluation Policy could allow larger urban school districts like Chicago District 299 to retain and hire high-quality leaders to head some of the schools with the neediest students. If principals believe they will not be penalized for taking the leadership helm of a school identified as failing, both personally and professionally, they might be more willing to serve underserved students, families, and communities.

An evaluation policy that promotes performing principals leading the neediest schools would definitely advance the idea postulated by George Washington Carver when he said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom" (Shealey, Sparks, & Thomas, 2012, p. 15). By providing every child, family, and community access to the highest-quality school leadership available, it would increase the likelihood of eradicating many of the social ills plaguing communities where failing schools are

located. If we as a nation create structures, laws, and policies supporting the elimination of practices that perpetuate inequality, society will come closer to the creed that is professed in our constitution.

For students to take full advantage of liberty, a high-quality education is mandatory. Therefore, policies that encourage high-quality school leaders to provide exemplary educational opportunities to the neediest students would foster this ideal. Recruiting, retaining, and supporting high-quality principals to lead schools in disadvantaged communities must be a priority in order to address the inequities of the past that many of these communities have been exposed. This policy offers a way of addressing some of the inequities that our neediest students face.

Values at the Center of the Policy

If the true intent of providing children an education is to bring them into the full realization of what it is to be human, then a policy supporting every child being served by a high-quality principal is a must. Therefore, students, families, and communities are at the center of this policy. This policy advocates for practices that encourage performing principals to not be discouraged from serving schools in high need areas out of fear of receiving poor evaluations based on social ills associated with disadvantaged neighborhoods.

A policy such as this could be key in addressing the education, achievement, opportunity, and experience gaps (and other gaps) faced by disadvantaged students (Wagner, 2014). It is suggested that the second most important factor that affects student learning, behind the classroom teacher, is a principal (Haller et al., 2016; Prothero, 2015). If this sentiment is true, then a high-quality principal is a must in the neediest schools.

Some school principals would be more apt to serve in underserved schools when a differentiated principal evaluation policy is enacted—thereby providing the students, families, and communities the high-quality leadership needed to possibly break cycles of poverty and underachievement (Mitgang, 2013).

Implementation of the Policy is Consistent with the Vision

Howard (2010) suggested that school failure perpetuates children, family, and community failures. In times past, people encouraged cycles of underperformance by groups by not educating them or undereducating these groups. If society genuinely wants to break the chains of poverty suffered by certain groups, then it must provide the necessary resources. This policy is consistent with the vision of affording every child and school the high-quality principal he or she deserves and needs in order to realize their full human potential. According to a report released by the Wallace Foundation, the nation's underperforming schools and children will not improve until a serious look at school leadership is seen as a conduit for success (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2017).

Chicago Public School's current motto is *Educate, Inspire, Transform*. This policy supports the essence of this motto. The implementation of this policy takes into account the many facets of individual school districts. A school district as large as CPS must address the diverse constituencies to which they are accountable. This policy attempts to incorporate the multitude of concerns that will be voiced by stakeholders ensuring that the real spirit of this policy will be implemented with the least amount of obstruction by stakeholders that presuppose they have something to lose. The implementation values all stakeholders by creating a panel made of the stakeholders, to

guide the process in order to maintain not only the integrity of the implementation process but also the policy itself. Implementation steps like these lend themselves to supporting the vision of this policy.

Needs and Concerns of all Stakeholders are Sufficiently Included

This policy is intended to encourage high-quality leadership in every school with a major focus on schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Students will be the major beneficiaries of this policy by encouraging high-quality school leadership in schools that can benefit from it the most. Also, school principals that have a passion for servicing students in high-needs neighborhoods are vital stakeholders related to this policy. These principals will be provided some incentives to service students in low socioeconomic communities as opposed to being dissuaded. Students will be more likely to have the high-quality school leadership they deserve when this policy is enacted. When this policy is put into effect, numerous ills that affect disadvantaged schools may be corrected. Achievement, opportunity, and experience gaps could be lessened with this policy in place. Research suggests that school gaps for disadvantaged students are minimized when schools are led by high-quality school leaders. The AEEB committee will be comprised of parents and other student advocates to ensure that student's needs and concerns are consistently addressed throughout the process. It is also suggested that educators operate based on an educator's oath to service children—that students' needs and concerns should and will be the top priority for all stakeholders involved (<http://aaeteachers.org/index.php/about-us/aae-code-of-ethics>).

Schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods often have high principal turnover (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Hull, 2012). Many researchers (such as Grant et al., 2014; Morsy

& Rothstein, 2015; Tzeggai, 2016) suggested that stress factors (such as trauma to students, low parental engagement, high teacher turnover, poor student attendance, high rates of misconduct, neighborhood violence, and poor student achievement), on top of a poor evaluation is enough to discourage high-performance school leaders from choosing to lead schools that need them the most. However, many of these high-performing principals may be products of these neighborhoods and would like to give back to them. This policy can help to lessen the negatives experienced by these principals by accounting for them in a differentiated principal evaluation policy.

The committee tasked with implementing the policy will be comprised of diverse principals ensuring their voices are heard when decisions are made. This practice should support their needs and concerns being addressed in a responsive manner. The implementation phase is also structured to process feedback and make adjustments as needed to address the needs and concerns of stakeholders to promote a greater certainty that the policy will garner the desired effect.

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