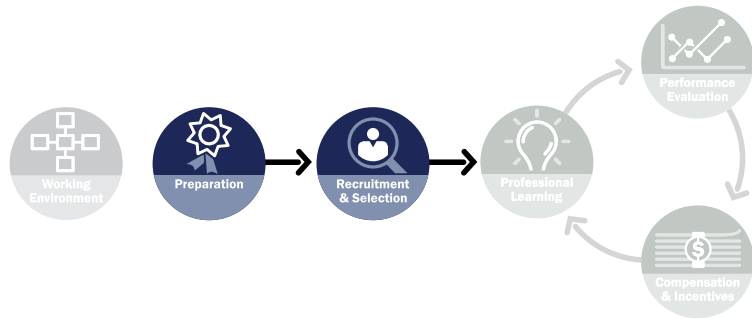


Hillsborough County Public Schools—The Hillsborough Principal Pipeline



Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS), located in Tampa, Florida, serves more than 200,000 students.¹¹⁹ HCPS, the eighth largest school system in the country, has worked to improve principal talent in their district for many years.¹²⁰

Practice Overview

HCPS’s PTM work revolves around a thorough process to select the right leaders for the right schools. This process is part of a larger, systemic, district-wide focus on preparing, developing, evaluating, and then retaining the best principals (work initially supported by the Wallace Foundation). Several important elements of the district’s process include: a set of school leader competencies, a structured path to the principalship that entails additional training and assignment as an assistant principal, and careful tracking of data about school leaders.

Selection Competencies

HCPS’ recruitment and selection process is unique in its close ties to the principal evaluation process. Both revolve around the HCPS School Leader Competency Rubric, which provides a comprehensive and consistent definition of what it means to be a successful school principal in the district and an effective instructional leader.¹²¹ Not only does this rubric describe what an effective principal looks like in HCPS, it also maps performance of each of the key elements over the course of a principal’s career. The rubric also details expectations throughout all stages of school leadership—from an aspiring principal to an experienced principal.

119. Hillsborough County Public Schools. (2016)

120. Hillsborough County Public Schools. (2011)

121. Cross & Joftus. (2013, July)

Path to the Principalship

Both internal and external candidates can apply for entry into the HCPS Principal Pipeline, which is the HCPS candidate pool and training program for leadership positions. They must have an Educational Leadership Certification (principal licensure in Florida) and at least three years of teaching experience. Both internal and external candidates enter the HCPS Administrative Selection Process. Along with an application form, the candidate must submit his or her most recent evaluation, two references, and a completed essay. From those who apply, selected candidates are invited to a 90 minute interview, which includes competency-based exercises. Successful candidates are then placed in a pool of potential future principals. Typically, it takes several years from entry into the pool until a candidate actually applies for a principal position in HCPS.

Once in the pool, candidates take the following steps:

Attend Future Leaders Academy (FLA). All candidates, both internal and external, must go through the Future Leaders Academy, a six-month preparation program. FLA course content can also be found online for those who do not live near the district.

Apply to Assistant Principal position. Once candidates successfully complete the FLA, they can then apply for an assistant principal position. All assistant principals receive a carefully selected mentor and two years of professional development.

Attend Preparing New Principals (PNP) Program. After three successful years in the assistant principal role, a candidate can then apply for the Preparing New Principals Program, which provides an additional two years of training. Thus, a candidate is in the assistant position role for a minimum of five years before moving onto the next phase.

Apply for Principal Position. Once candidates finish the PNP, they are eligible to apply for a principal position.

Collecting Data to Improve Recruitment and Selection: Leader Tracking System

HCPS's leader-tracking systems collect longitudinal data on potential school leaders that include: previous experience (both type of role and length), certification, detailed preparation information, performance evaluation data, and data about participation in professional development. This system allows HCPS to:

Improve the principal candidate pool. The district can systematically review candidates' credentials, experiences, and training and proactively determine those that are best qualified to become a principal. The district can also tailor professional development to meet the needs of aspiring leaders and to prepare leaders for schools that will soon have openings.

Better match candidates to schools. When principal positions open up, the district can make well-informed decisions on the school that a qualified aspiring leader should be placed in based on that candidate's experiences and training.

Source: Information for this "District to Watch" example was collected through a phone interview with **Tricia McManus, Director of Leadership Development, Hillsborough County Public Schools**; and through the district's website.