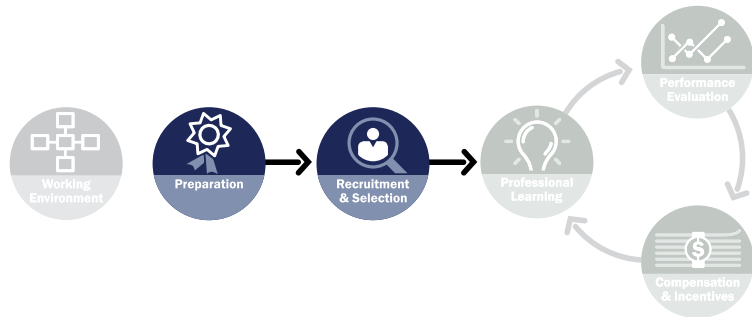


Houston Independent School District—Principal Candidate Development Opportunity



Houston Independent School District (HISD) is the largest school district in Texas and ranks among the ten largest districts in the nation, serving approximately 215,000 students in 283 schools.¹²²

Practice Overview

In early 2015, HISD introduced the Principal Candidate Development Opportunity (PCDO) program as both a preparation as well as a recruitment and selection program for the district. The PCDO is a 24-month program that trains aspiring principals to support their teachers' development into effective educators¹²³. The program focuses on a set of observations, the provision of feedback, data analysis, data-driven instructional planning, school culture and portfolio reflections, and shadowing of principals for four days (either half or full). The PCDO program wants candidates to use these shadowing opportunities to obtain a real understanding of what a principal does, avoiding snapshot versions of principals' daily activities. In short, the PCDO program is a rigorous training ground for aspiring principals.

Additionally, the PCDO program employs a performance-based assessment called the Performance Combine in which the candidates demonstrate their improved skills and knowledge. This is a two-day event where the

candidates are in a school and engage in high-leverage leadership practices such as: observing a classroom and providing feedback to the teacher; engaging in data-informed decision-making; making action plans; and interviewing with hiring managers, talking through their performance and portfolios.

Collecting Data to Monitor Success

Candidates have had positive, qualitative feedback on the program. In a HISD Leadership Development newsletter (Issue 17, April 2015) highlighting the PCDO program, one candidate noted improvements in areas such as observation and feedback and data-driven decision-making. Another candidate found this to be a useful opportunity to practice these skills with peers, discuss implementation, and connect all training material to student performance. A third candidate remarked that the program helped clarify the vision of effective instructional leadership. Another candidate found that real-time and specific feedback from district experts was the most useful component of PCDO.

HISD communications materials report that out of the 32 participants, most have either interviewed for or already accepted a principal position within HISD.¹²⁴ Since the inaugural group of 32 PCDO candidates completed the program in April 2015, HISD is still in the process of collecting evidence of program impact. However, they have a clear idea of the types of data they want to track to measure impact. For long-term impact, HISD plans to gather student outcome data. To track short-term impact the district will gather data on: principal retention, principal evaluation, teacher and parent satisfaction, and the number of effective teachers the PCDO principals are able to develop (via teacher appraisal and development system data).

Source: Information for this "District to Watch" example was collected through an interview with **Darryl Williams, Chief Officer for School Leadership at Houston Independent School District**; the HISD website; and a **HISD Leadership Development** newsletter (Issue 17, April 2015).

122. [Houston Independent School District \(2016\)](#)

123. [HISD Communications \(2015, April 30\)](#)

124. [HISD Communications \(2015, April 30\)](#)