

**Summary Report on
National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)
Executive Development Program**

and

**Virginia's Principal of Distinction (Level II)
Administration and Supervision Endorsement**

***Presented to Virginia Board of Education
by
Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership
(VFEL)***

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**National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)
Executive Development Program
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Administration and Supervision Endorsement**

***Summary Report prepared by
Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership***

The Executive Development Program for school leaders, developed by the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), was launched in Virginia in 2013 under the administration of the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The NISL Executive Development Program is an extensive, researched-based training program provided over a 12-18 month period. The program is designed to transform schools by providing training to entire school leadership teams including principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders, as well as division staff. In addition, school divisions use the NISL Executive Development Program to improve the effectiveness of participating principals, especially principals in struggling schools. The program requires participants to complete online coursework, attend 27 days of training, complete personal assessments, conduct school-wide surveys, analyze data, read the works of leading researchers, and implement individualized Action Learning Plans. Rigorous studies, such as the one conducted in 2011 by Johns Hopkins and Old Dominion universities, reinforce the significant impact that NISL programs have in improving school leadership and raising student achievement in both mathematics and English/language arts (<http://www.nisl.net/proven-results/summary-of-key-results/>). Upon completion of the program, participants have unwaveringly increased and intensified their knowledge and skills as strategic thinkers, instructional leaders, and architects of school cultures in which all students are expected to meet high standards. VFEL and NISL believe that principals who successfully complete the Executive Development Program should earn Level II of Virginia’s Principal of Distinction Administration and Supervision Endorsement.

Introduction

In 2012, then-Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright identified the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) as Virginia’s agent to implement NISL’s Executive Development Program. VFEL, incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1995, is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The mission of VFEL is to foster and strengthen a comprehensive system of leadership learning that

links all education levels – preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and higher education – by supporting research-based strategies for continuous leadership development and school improvement that address the academic achievement of all students. It was evident that the mission of VFEL and the goals of the NISL Executive Development Program would provide a strong foundation for rigorous professional development, reinforce a common vision for education and student achievement, and utilize the power of these two organizations together for the betterment of school leaders throughout the Commonwealth. Virginia is the 21st state to participate in NISL training programs.

The Virginia Department of Education announced in a March 2014 news release the successful NISL launch. Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Patricia Wright and VFEL President Dr. Randy Barrack applauded the first Virginia cohort of educators to graduate from the NISL Executive Development Program:

“Strong building- and central office-level leadership results in better classroom instruction and increased student learning,” Wright said. “I want to thank the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership for partnering with me to bring the NISL Executive Development Program for School Leaders to Virginia.”

“This is the start of something big,” said VFEL President Randy Barrack, who is also the executive director of the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP). “The school leaders and educators who have completed this nationally recognized leadership development program are now making a difference in schools across the state, and the impact of the program will grow with the graduation of each additional cohort.”

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2014/03_mar26.shtml

The first class in Virginia of 23 educators completed the 13-unit, 27-day NISL training program in January 2014 (Appendix A, page 13). In addition to successfully completing the program, nine of the 23 participants earned certification from NISL to present the NISL training program throughout the Commonwealth and nation (Appendix B, page 15). According to NISL Director of Instruction Jennifer Beck-Wilson, it was *“unprecedented for NISL to certify facilitators this soon, but the depth, knowledge and experience of the (Virginia) candidates convinced NISL to move forward with certifying each VFEL faculty member.”* The nine also received an additional five days of comprehensive training in principal coaching.

As the program progressed with the first cohort, members of VFEL and VDOE recognized strong connections existed between the components of the training program and the regulatory requirements for earning the Virginia Board of Education’s Principal of Distinction(Level II) endorsement (*Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*, Virginia

Board of Education, 8VAC20-22-590). It became increasingly apparent that participation in this exceptional leadership training strengthens the knowledge, skills, and abilities of school leaders to move forward with their efforts for continuous school improvement and student achievement (Appendix C, page 16). Based on this analysis, the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership strongly supports NISL's Education Development Program as a method for K-12 principals to achieve Level II, Principal of Distinction endorsement.

This report provides a summary of the NISL Executive Development Program and its implementation in Virginia. More detailed information on the program is provided in the appendices:

Appendix A: NISL Cohort I and Cohort II Participants (page 13)

Appendix B: NISL Certified Facilitators (Trainers) in Virginia (page 15)

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Overview of the NISL Executive Development Program

The NISL Executive Development Program is the culmination of significant research, development, and field-testing – and reinforced with ongoing updates – that leverage leading researchers and practitioners from education and other fields. Experts and leaders in fields such as education theory and practice, literacy, mathematics, business and organizational leadership, and the military continuously contribute to NISL's curriculum and course content. The result is a comprehensive curriculum that uses the latest research on adult learning and combines best practices in teaching and learning, subject-area content knowledge, and leadership knowledge and practices, including:

- *Best practices for delivery of adult curriculum: 360° assessments; cohort-based; job-embedded learning; simulations; case studies; group discussion; and extended period of study.*
- *Best practices in teaching and learning: Coaching and teacher supervision; use of standards-based classrooms; formative assessment; instructional teams; compelling school vision; differentiated instruction; and professional learning communities.*
- *Subject-area knowledge: Creating excellent school-wide programs in English*

- language arts, mathematics and science; identifying and coaching towards strong instruction in the content areas.*
- *Leadership knowledge and skills: Strategic thinking; strong school culture and team building; data-driven organization; importance of systems; turnaround leadership competencies.*

The [Business Roundtable](#), as part of its goal to “recognize what’s working,” selected the NISL Executive Development Program in 2013 as one of the five “K-12 education programs that have demonstrated a strong potential for helping prepare more U. S. K-12 students for college and the workplace” (press release, October 13, 2013). More than 100 programs were considered. More information regarding the NISL training program and course curricula is provided in Appendix D (page 19) as well as on the [NISL](#) website. A list of commonly asked questions is provided in Appendix E (page 33).

The Implementation of NISL in Virginia

To implement change in schools, school leaders must have the tools and knowledge to address and implement a continuous improvement model that is based on strategic planning, a culture of high expectations, and a commitment by all stakeholders for the achievement of all students. Following intense research, and in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership identified the Executive Development Program by the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) as a program that would strengthen the instructional leadership of aspiring and current school leaders with the intended result of improved student achievement, especially in the most challenging schools. Preparations began in 2012 by VDOE, VASSP, and NISL to provide leadership training to Virginia school and division leaders supported by federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) awards.

VFEL collaborated with the VDOE Office of School Improvement to identify and recruit NISL participants for cohort training. Participants were deliberately selected from divisions that serve some of Virginia’s most challenged schools. The result was the successful launching of the first cohort in January 2013.

VFEL and VDOE Rationale for Targeting Challenged Schools. The Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL), in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), collaborated to identify a premier leadership experience for principals of struggling schools across the commonwealth. Specifically, the use of NISL’s Executive Development Program was identified for principals of those schools meeting federal Priority Status. Priority schools are defined as the state’s most challenged schools under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver*.

The partnership between VFEL and VDOE was made to ensure that selected priority schools received extensive leadership training so that principals and division central office staff would have a common language and a set of common practices to implement, and that increased leadership capacity would prevail at all levels. In addition, this training would build the division and school's capacity to lead in times of adversity and to make informed decisions to support student achievement when the school moved out of priority status. Ultimately, both VFEL and VDOE confirmed the importance of strong leadership in challenged schools - leadership required not only by the principal but by everyone tied to the school - could not be overstated.

Alignment with Virginia's Turnaround Principles. The concrete alignment of NISL's Executive Development Program to Virginia's central principles used with turnaround schools is outlined here. Virginia's model identified a set of Turnaround Principles, as required by the United States Department of Education (USED), that, when used with struggling schools, garners growth. These Turnaround Principles (TP) are meaningful interventions designed to improve the academic achievement of students in priority schools. They are designed to be reviewed by division staff and then selected with family and community input. Once identified, priority schools and their respective divisions are required to select and implement a turnaround model to address the needs of all students. NISL supports, in turn, the participating divisions in the implementation of all requirements of the USED turnaround principles. The principles to which NISL aligns are as follows:

- TP1: Providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;
- TP2: Ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort;
- TP3: Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards;
- TP4: Using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including providing time for collaboration on the use of data;
- TP5: Establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs.

Process to select Cohort Participants. VFEL works with division superintendents and NISL to establish cohorts of principals and other school leaders, including aspiring administrators, to participate in the Executive Development Program. Appendix F (page 35) includes a detailed description of VFEL’s procedures for the recruitment and selection of Virginia educators to participate in the NISL training program.

Program trainers. Trainers are Virginia educators who have been certified by NISL as Executive Development Program Facilitators. Current trainers participated in the Facilitators Institute, engaged in juried presentation demonstrations, and completed all requirements of the Executive Development program as led by national trainers. Following initial certification, trainers are required to participate in additional professional development activities provided by NISL. School divisions can deliver the training themselves, using NISL-certified trainers provided by VFEL, or participate in VFEL organized cohort groups.

Program logistics. The NISL Executive Development Program that is administered by VFEL includes 27 days of instruction consisting of 13 two-day units and a coaching unit, bridged by professional readings, site-based activities, and online learning. One unit is delivered each month in back-to-back days, with some months skipped due to holidays and/or testing periods. Units may also be clustered to take advantage of scheduled professional development periods. Cohorts range in size from 20 to 40 participants. Additional facilitation training is required of participants desiring to become certified NISL trainers.

The cost of NISL training varies depending on the delivery model selected for the cohort. VFEL offers a selection of models based on the needs of the school division and the number of cohort participants. More information can be found on the VFEL website, www.edleader.org.

Studies. A recent Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) Report (June 9, 2014) noted that schools in Virginia that are achieving despite the odds do a number of things differently (p.21) including:

- Using recommended instructional practices more consistently than lower performing schools;
- Supporting the many needs of students;
- Providing additional support for students;
- Regularly analyzing student performance data, monitoring, and adjusting instruction;
- Providing timely remediation for students;
- Using formative assessments;
- Creating opportunities for teachers to work together in planning;

- Providing regular professional development;
- Having principals who are instructional leaders who promote instructional practice through professional development and coaching; and
- Providing quality feedback to teachers.

The above list from the JLARC study could have been taken directly from the NISL Executive Development Program. All of the above are part of the program.

According to the study conducted by Old Dominion and Johns Hopkins universities in 2011, researchers found that the program is impacting student achievement at a rate similar to much more expensive initiatives such as whole school design and class size reduction, and have found the program to be “highly cost-effective”. (*The Impact of the NISL Executive Development Program on School Performance in Massachusetts: Round 2*, Old Dominion University, Johns Hopkins University, July 2011)

The report concluded that compared to the few other school-leadership programs that can demonstrate increases in student performance, the NISL Executive Development Program is graduating leaders at 1/10th to 1/20th the cost.

Alignment of the NISL Executive Development Program and Virginia’s Principal of Distinction (Level II) Administration and Supervision Endorsement

The NISL Executive Development Program supports eligible principals in meeting the regulatory requirements for earning the Virginia Board of Education’s Principal of Distinction (Level II) endorsement (*Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*, Virginia Board of Education, 8VAC20-22-590):

8VAC20-22-590. Administration and supervision preK-12.

F. Level II endorsement in administration and supervision preK-12. A building-level administrator may seek Level II endorsement in administration and supervision preK-12 after successfully serving as a building-level administrator for at least five years in a public school or accredited nonpublic school and successfully completing a formal induction program as a principal or assistant principal. In order to earn Level II endorsement, the candidate must meet two or more of the following criteria as specified by the Board of Education and documented in a Department of Education approved format and be recommended by the employing Virginia school division superintendent:

- 1. Evidence of improved student achievement;*
- 2. Evidence of effective instructional leadership;*

3. *Evidence of positive effect on school climate or culture;*
4. *Earned doctorate in educational leadership or evidence of formal professional development in the areas of school law, school finance, supervision, human resource management, and instructional leadership; or*
5. *Evidence of a completion of a high-quality professional development project designed by the division superintendent.*

Performance Standards for Principals. In addition, the NISL training approach, depth and scope of course content, leadership and instructional training, coaching, and case studies align and support the Virginia Board of Education’s performance standards for principals (*Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals*):

1. **Instructional Leadership:** *The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to student academic progress and school improvement.*
2. **School Climate:** *The principal fosters the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.*
3. **Human Resources Management:** *The principal fosters effective human resources management by assisting with selection and induction, and by supporting, evaluating, and retaining quality instructional and support personnel.*
4. **Organizational Management:** *The principal fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school’s organization, operation, and use of resources.*
5. **Communication and Community Relations:** *The principal fosters the success of all students by communicating and collaborating effectively with stakeholders.*
6. **Professionalism:** *The principal fosters the success of all students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.*
7. **Student Academic Progress:** *The principal’s leadership results in acceptable, measurable student academic progress based on established standards.*

Criteria for Principal of Distinction (Level II) endorsement. With support from the division superintendent and upon successful completion of the NISL program, the principal will have met at least two of the following criteria and be eligible for Principal of Distinction (Level II) endorsement:

1. Evidence of improved student achievement;
2. Evidence of effective instructional leadership;
3. Evidence of positive effect on school climate or culture;

4. Earned doctorate in educational leadership or evidence of formal professional development in the areas of school law, school finance, supervision, human resource management, and instructional leadership (NISL participants will have Level I Administration and Supervision endorsement and have fulfilled this criteria.); or
5. Evidence of a completion of a high-quality professional development project designed by the division superintendent. (NISL satisfies this requirement.)

Alignment. Virginia’s licensure regulations, performance standards for principals, and NISL course objectives parallel and intertwine in such a way that a principal in Virginia who successfully completes the Executive Development Program meets the expectations of an exceptional school leader.

The Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL), in supporting the professional needs of K-12 school leaders, ensures that principals desiring to pursue the Principal of Distinction (Level II) endorsement by completing the NISL training program will meet eligibility criterion as set forth in the regulations, including serving as a building-level administrator for at least five years in a public school or accredited nonpublic school and completing a formal induction program, and will have the support of the division superintendent as part of VFEL’s application process. Of interest for administrators who have not participated in an induction program: successful completion of NISL training may be used as an alternative means to document professional growth that is intended to advance school leadership and goal attainment pending approval.

VFEL will certify to division superintendents successful completion by participants of the NISL Executive Development Program, which includes meeting coursework expectations and requirements, collecting and analyzing data, reading latest research, and implementing Action Learning Plans. Per an agreement between VFEL and the division superintendent, VFEL will recommend that the eligible principal be issued the Principal of Distinction (Level II) endorsement.

Inherent in the Principal of Distinction (Level II) performance evaluation indicators is the skill to responsively meet student needs, create collaborative work environments for teachers, engage constituencies in school improvement efforts, and foster a commitment to learning-centered schools. Appendix G (page 36) further demonstrates the impressive alignment of NISL course content and training approaches with endorsement requirements and *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* (2012).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
NISL Cohort I and Cohort II Participants

The first class of Virginia educators (Cohort I) completed the 13-unit, 27-day NISL Executive Development Program in January 2014. They joined more than 7,000 school leaders nationwide who have been trained through the NISL Executive Development Program. Participants who completed the training are listed below with the job position title held at the time of their training.

Richmond City		
Participant	Position	Location
Dr. Michelle Boyd	Executive Director of Exceptional Child & Student Service	Richmond City Public Schools
Mrs. Beverly L. Britt	Principal	John Marshall High School
Dr. Darlene L. Currie	Director of Professional Development	Richmond City Public Schools
Mr. Eric N. Jones	Principal	Elkhardt Middle School
Mrs. Victoria S. Oakley	Chief Academic Officer	Richmond City Public Schools
Newport News		
Participant	Position	Location
Mrs. Kimberly Judge	Special Education Supervisor	Newport News Public Schools
Ms. Angela Rhett	Development and Expertise Supervisor	Newport News Public Schools
Ms. Varinda Robinson	School Improvement Supervisor	Newport News Public Schools
Dr. Garrett Smith	Executive Director of Elementary School Leadership	Newport News Public Schools
Virginia Department of Education		
Participant	Position	
Dr. Gary Blair	School Improvement Contractor; former superintendent of Buckingham County Public Schools	
Dr. Frank Ehrhart	School Improvement Contractor	
Mrs. Janice Garland	Lead School Improvement Coordinator	
Ms. Selena McBride	Reports and Grants Manager	
Mrs. Beverly Rabil	Priority Schools Coordinator	

A second Virginia cohort (Cohort II) of 22 principals and other instructional leaders began the NISL training program in March 2014 and will complete the program in 2015. Cohort II participants represent VDOE and school divisions that serve some of Virginia's most challenged schools. They are joining more than 7,000 school leaders nationwide who have been trained through the NISL Executive Development Program. (Job positions listed are those held at the time of cohort training.)

Henrico County Public Schools		
Participant	Position	Location
Dr. Ingrid G. Grant	Director	Director of Middle Schools
Ms. Kimberly D. Lee	Principal	Glen Lea Elementary School
Dr. Omega W. Wilson	Director	Director of High Schools
Petersburg City Public Schools		
Participant	Position	Location
Dr. Shawnrell D. Blackwell	Director	Federal Programs/School Improvement
Ms. Dominique N. F. Bourgeois	Principal	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School
Ms. Ahnjayla D. Hunter	Director	Special Education
Ms. Kori L. Reddick	Principal	A.P. Hill Elementary School
Mrs. Belinda W. Urquhart	Principal	Walnut Hill Elementary School
Prince Edward County Public Schools		
Participant	Position	Location
Mrs. Lucy B. Carson	Principal	Prince Edward County Middle School
Mr. Zoltan Kerestely	Principal	Prince Edward County High School
Mrs. Amy J. McCurdy	Principal	Prince Edward County Elementary School
Ms. Laura W. Williamson	Executive Director	Instruction & Curriculum
Richmond City Public Schools		
Participant	Position	Location
Mr. Deberry L. Goodwin	Principal	Henderson Middle School
Mr. Dana D. Hawes	Principal	Richmond Alternative School
Mr. Rickie G. Hopkins	Principal	Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School
Dr. Tyrus T. Lyles	Principal	Binford Middle School
Dr. Wayne D. Scott	School Improvement Manager	Secondary Schools
Virginia Department of Education		
Participant	Position	Location
Dr. Yvonne A. Holloman	Associate Director	Office of School Improvement

APPENDIX B

NISL Certified Facilitators (Trainers) in Virginia

In addition to successfully completing the program as members of Cohort I, the following nine educators earned certification from NISL to present the Executive Development Program training throughout the Commonwealth and nation. NISL certification is valid for three years, after which recertification by NISL is required to continue delivering the Executive Development Program. (Job positions listed were those held at the time of facilitator training.)

NISL Facilitator/Trainer	Job Title	Organization
Dr. Randy D. Barrack	VFEL President; VASSP Executive Director	VFEL VASSP
Ms. Janice Case	VFEL Project Coordinator; former Principal, Potomac Falls High School, Loudoun County Public Schools	VFEL
Dr. Antonia Fox	Principal, Tabb Middle School	York County Public Schools
Ms. Ann F. Harman	VDOE School Improvement Contractor	VDOE VFEL
Dr. Charles W. Harris III	VFEL Program Evaluator; former Superintendent, Sussex County Public Schools	VFEL
Mr. Abe E. Jeffers	Executive Director of Secondary Education; former Principal, Lee High School, Fairfax County Public Schools	Richmond City Public Schools
Dr. Roger E. Jones	Professor of Educational Leadership; VASSP Director of Educational Leadership Regional Center	Lynchburg College VASSP VFEL
Dr. Brian K. Matney	Principal, Landstown High School Governor's STEM and Technology Academy	Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Dr. Carol C. Robinson	VFEL Executive Coach; former principal and school improvement specialist K-12, Fairfax County Public Schools	VFEL

APPENDIX C

Testimonials

The following testimonials are samples of reactions and appreciation regarding the high quality and impact of the NISL Executive Development Program. Additional testimonials are available upon request.

What I value most about NISL training is that it directly relates to student achievement, best practices and research. I come away from each session both energized and exhausted as the trainers push you to think more reflectively and intentionally about the work you engage in every day as an instructional leader. NISL training is providing me with the tools, strategies, and support to be a highly effective leader. Amy McCurdy (Cohort II – Principal, Prince Edward Elementary School, Prince Edward County Public Schools)

Participation in NISL has enhanced my professional growth and ability to serve as a more effective leader of leaders. The most salient component of the NISL program that has impacted my work to date was the emphasis on quality coaching such that persons I support become better at their craft in support of increased student achievement. NISL helped shift my thought process in how I support staff so that I think first about "asking the right question" instead of "giving the right answer." Hence, I am better equipped to support teachers and administrators via use of quality questioning and feedback.

Michelle Boyd, Ed.D. (Cohort I, Executive Director, Exceptional Education and Student Services, Richmond City Public Schools)

I am pleased to share with you some of the benefits that we have seen with our administrative team members that are participating in NISL. All three principals from Prince Edward County Public Schools are in the current cohort, with our Executive Director of Instruction. At the beginning of this cohort [Cohort II], two of our principals were in their first year. The development of leadership skills for our entire team was enhanced by both the curriculum material and the guided teamwork with their colleagues from other school divisions. The design of the NISL program helps further their development by the long-term association with the same cohort group as they grow and study together. In the fast-paced world of school leadership, it would have been extremely difficult for our leadership team to develop their skills this quickly by any other means. Thank you for your leadership and guidance as this program has developed! K. David Smith, Ed.D. (Division Superintendent, Prince Edward County Public Schools)

In my current position, NISL has helped me to become a stronger coach for the principals in school improvement by providing them with specific feedback of how to become better instructional leaders. The school improvement meetings are more focused to

include the disaggregation of data and actions steps that are measurable. From the techniques that I learned from NISL, the school improvement meetings are becoming richer with in depth-conversations and collaborative problem solving to improve student achievement. In addition, the NISL content has allowed me to make better decisions about approving purchases and supplemental resources with the use of federal funds. The purchases are more aligned with the vision and division/school level comprehensive school improvement plans. Last, the NISL experience has allowed me to adopt global perspectives to implement effective practices to enhance teaching and learning.
Shawnrell Blackwell, Ed.D. (Cohort II – Director, Federal Programs and School Improvement, Petersburg City Public Schools)

The collaboration between VFEL and NISL both inspires – and compels – practitioners to help lead the urgent reforms needed in how we educate young people in the Commonwealth and across our nation. As we seek to remain competitive on a global stage and in the world marketplace of the 21st century, our dedication to fostering deep, critical thinking and meaningful collaboration among our students remains imperative. My work with the Foundation has challenged me to aim higher, reflect more thoroughly, and think more creatively than ever before. Brian Matney, Ph.D. (Cohort I – Principal, Landstown High School and Governor’s STEM Academy, Virginia Beach Public Schools)

As the Director of High School Education in Henrico County, I have found NISL to be of significant value. The information that is shared in the classes is needed for all principals-on all levels and in all divisions. NISL has afforded me the opportunity to further mentor and guide administrators in all areas. Additionally, the program has stretched me as an administrator and a leader and I am able to incorporate a plethora of strategies and techniques into the many methods I presently use when working with administrators to build leadership capacity. NISL is a game changer and I highly recommend this program for all principals. Thank you for making the difference.
Omega Wilson, Ed.D. (Cohort II – Director, High Schools, Henrico County Public Schools)

I have become "NISL." Meaning, I have embodied several of the components that we have reviewed and learned thus far. I have taken the concept of vision and have begun incorporating that concept into the Department of Special Education. I have come to the understanding that I must trust in the staff and teach them how to problem solve. Our division level teacher meetings are even more focused-driven and targeted than before. I ensure that norms are established before the meeting begins. I have become more focused on the safety nets of the students because everyone is a part of that net. I try to acknowledge the positive things that are going on in our department and let the staff know, more often, how much they are appreciated. I let them know when they are doing an excellent job, commend them when they submit items on time, and use "needs improvement" opportunities as opportunities to teach. Some duties are delegated to staff so they will know that they are part of the team and I respect their input. These are

just a few. I believe that it is difficult to summarize all that I am doing with all of the knowledge that we are receiving. It's almost like reading the "Art of War." Like those lessons, you don't actually "do" them. They become a part of you. Ahnjayla D. Hunter
(Cohort II – Director, Special Education, Petersburg City Public Schools)

APPENDIX D
National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)
Executive Development Program:
Units, Topics, and Themes

Additional information regarding the Executive Development Program can be found on NISL's website: <http://www.nisl.net/executive-development-program/our-approach/>.

Course One: World-Class Schooling--Vision and Goals

Unit 1: The Educational Challenge

This unit examines the global, national, and local context of where we are and where we are heading in American public education. The driving forces of globalization, the advancing workforce skills in many nations, and the consequent need for the people of the United States to be better prepared than we are now to compete successfully for high-value-added products and services require us to do a much better job of graduating well-educated students ready to go on to college and career.

The unit also helps the participant make a realistic assessment of the challenges that schools must meet if high standards are to be achieved, including the corrosive effect of pervasive low expectations for many poor and minority students. And it is designed to help the participants accept and embrace the goal of getting *every* student ready for college or career by the time that student leaves high school.

Topics: vision and purposes of the NISL program; personal leadership skills and leadership development plan; changes in the global economy and effects on increased need for high-skilled workers; implications of ESEA legislation and state waivers; social, moral, and emotional development as enduring goals; all students must reach high academic standards; need for deep systemic educational reform that prepares all students for college and career; major challenges facing principals; Pasadena and Wise video case studies; Action Learning Project (ALP).

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- Changes in the world economy have dramatically reduced the need for low-skilled workers and increased the need for high-skilled labor.
- Focus on instructional leadership in a standards-based context.
- Standards-based instruction requires and provides a powerful set of strategies for meeting the challenges schools and school leaders now face.

- NISL’s goal is to assist school leaders in taking the people they have in place now or in the pipeline, and enabling them to drive schools to a much higher level of performance with a budget no larger than they currently have.
- **All** students can and must meet high standards.
- Six main elements of instructional leadership are vision; systems thinking and data; effective instructional practice, alignment and coherence; learning communities and teams; and sustaining improvement
- Moral leadership consists in doing what is right for students.
- In the Pasadena and Wise High School video case studies, participants will discern the core issues, wrestle with the ethical dilemmas presented, analyze decision-making strategies, think through actions they might have taken themselves in comparison with those described in the case, comprehend the courage required in making tough decisions, and consider ways to make instructional leadership *systemic and strategic*—the main focus—not dependent solely on a powerful personality.

Unit 2: The Principal as Strategic Thinker

The purpose of this unit is to enable the participant to think strategically about the challenges he or she faces and to put together a clear and powerful strategy for addressing those challenges. While much of this unit draws on experience from business and the military, the participant is asked to apply what is learned to the world of the school—for example, they examine their own school visions against effective vision criteria. Participants are introduced to the distinctions among tactical, operational, and strategic thinking. They are shown how to take into account all aspects of a problem, how to systematically assess the challenges to be overcome and the assets to be mobilized. And they are introduced to the elements of planning and decision making required both to construct a viable strategy and to execute it successfully.

As a result of the two days on this unit, participants should fully comprehend the need to think strategically and to make action plans in connection with the subjects and goals of the next several units (particularly, standards-based instructional systems; the principles of teaching, learning and curriculum building; literacy; mathematics; science; and professional learning).

Topics: criteria for evaluating school visions; the concepts of vision, mission, and strategy; strategic thinking and strategy; conceptual framework for thinking strategically; case study methodology; operational planning and tactics; decision making models, processes, and framework; strategic leadership; barriers to strategic thinking; politico-military, business, and education case studies.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- The principal must lead the effort and motivate a school team to create and commit to a vision of where the school wants to be over a period of years; develop a strategy to implement that vision; build action plans to execute the strategy; and apply a process for measuring accomplishments.
- Thinking strategically is all about matching up clear ends or goals with the available or attainable resources.
- An effective conceptual framework for strategic thinking starts with an examination of the context and the vision, and includes consideration of assumptions, interests, objectives, capabilities, threats, and risks.
- A school vision must: be achievable and doable; be focused on results; be measurable, simple and clear; be actionable; lend itself to a strategy to accomplish the vision; lead to hard choices, and be worth fighting for.
- An understanding of decision making models helps the principal turn thought into priorities, effective action, and powerful practice.
- Strategic leaders share some common characteristics—deep knowledge of their business, clear expectations and accountability, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and leading for results.
- Strategic thinking is little more than a mental exercise unless accompanied by deliberative decision-making and decisive actions.
- The principal’s responsibility is to consider different approaches and agendas in coming to a decision and implementing actions that carry out a decision. However, the goal is not just operational excellence (doing what you have been doing very well) but ensuring that the actions taken are coherent, consistent, and aligned with the strategy.

Unit 3: Elements of Standards-Based Instructional Systems

The purpose of this unit is to help the participant develop a sophisticated understanding of the components of standards-based instructional systems and the ways those components can be combined to produce very powerful effects on student performance. Participants learn about different kinds of standards and assessments available and the appropriate uses of each. They learn how to distinguish assessments that are genuinely aligned to standards from those that are not. They learn how to build curriculum frameworks designed to array topics in a logical way to enable students to reach standards over a period of years and how to analyze and select instructional materials that are aligned with the standards and the frameworks. Most important, they learn what the role of the principal is in assuring that his or her school has a fully aligned instructional system that is focused on the standards and is internally coherent and consistent.

Topics: Standards-based instructional systems; standards: types and criteria; authority scale; assessment: types, purposes, and multiple uses; curriculum framework; instructional materials; aligned instruction; safety nets; degree of alignment in schools; Virginia Standards of Learning; building coherence; the role of the principal in a standards-based instructional system; stakeholder analysis.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- A standards-based instructional system includes several critical elements: clear, high standards; fair assessments; curriculum framework; instructional materials, effective instruction; safety nets—supported by leadership and professional development.
- Performance standards and assessments should drive teaching and learning in standards-based schools.
- The principal has a critical role in orchestrating an aligned and coherent standards-based instructional system and promoting a standards-based culture where meeting/exceeding standards come first in everything the school does.
- Principals must understand formative, embedded, and summative assessments, as well as their relationship.
- Diagnostic assessments are critical because they enable the teacher to tailor instruction to the needs of each student. (Differentiated instruction)
- Assessments should be used to revise instructional strategies and align them to the standards and curriculum framework.
- Every child not achieving high standards will need the support of a comprehensive safety net system—mostly before the bell.
- Schools are systems wherein reform of any part of the instructional environment requires realignment of all other critical elements to ensure improved student learning.
- Participants will define their Action Learning Project using the NISL Conceptual Framework for Strategic Thinking as a blueprint (along with school data and results of their Instructional Leadership Instrument and School Context Assessment). There is no more important thrust to NISL's work than to apply what is learned to real projects that will improve classroom instructional practices—thereby increasing student achievement.

Unit 4: Foundations of Effective Learning

Learning and teaching are the core business of schools, and yet little attention is given to developing a systematic and common understanding among school leaders of the principles associated with these demands. This unit provides school leaders with the theory of action, knowledge and skills they need to improve instruction and learning in a standards-based school environment. A coherent theory of action, and a set of 13

research-based principles for learning, teaching, and curriculum will provide the framework for discussion. The unit focuses on the particular role of the school leader in making sure that the way the school operates reflects each principle of learning, teaching, and curriculum.

Topics: principles of teaching, learning, and curriculum; impacts/implications of five learning principles, five teaching principles, and three curriculum principles on/for the role of the principal in a school; class effects compared to school effects on student performance; classroom practices; TIMSS--Japanese and American classrooms; and concept mapping.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- When the principles of teaching, learning, and curriculum are fully implemented, classroom instruction, student engagement, and curriculum alignment look very different in our schools.
- Five principles of learning: effort produces achievement; learning is about making connections; we learn with and through others; learning takes time; and motivation matters.
- Five principles of teaching: the teacher matters; focused teaching promotes accelerated learning; clear expectations and continuous feedback activate learning; good teaching builds on students' strengths and respects individuals' differences; and good teaching involves modeling what students should learn.
- Three principles of curriculum: the curriculum should focus on powerful knowledge; all students should experience a "thinking curriculum"; and the best results come from having an aligned instructional system.
- Improvement will occur if all classes/teachers operate at the level of the most effective ones in the school.
- Principals will understand vast differences in teaching, learning, and curriculum as they observe via TIMMS videos teachers teaching roughly the same math concept in a Japanese classroom and in an American classroom.

Course Two: Focusing on Teaching and Learning

Unit 5: Leadership for Excellence in Literacy

This unit helps enable the participant to be an effective instructional leader in this crucial area. The aim is not to turn the principal into a literacy expert, but rather to enable the principal to recognize the key elements of best practice in the field of literacy and provide the principal with sound criteria for judging whether the school has an effective literacy program and some practice in using those criteria. Also included in this unit is instruction designed to enable the participant to recognize the key features of

effective safety net programs in literacy, so that he or she can exercise leadership, if necessary, in the development of effective safety nets to make sure that all students are literate, no matter what level they had when they entered that school.

Topics: reading and writing principles and standards; latest research findings; struggling readers in middle and high schools; reading assessment tools and approaches; literacy expectations; school-wide strategies for improving literacy outcomes for all students; professional development in literacy; Standards of Learning objectives for literacy; accountability; characteristics of a good early reading program and of a good struggling readers program; NAEP compared to state assessments.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- The principal must become steeped, as an instructional leader, in the essentials of teaching literacy, how to recognize best practices, and how to assess the quality of instruction by engaging in conversations with students and looking at their work.
- The United States performs above average in 4th grade reading achievement—compared to other developed nations. However, student performance compared to other developed nations, declines after 4th grade.
- Principals need to know and be able to apply at the appropriate level powerful instructional strategies for elementary, middle, and high schools in order to address the needs of struggling readers.
- Research into effective class organization offers compelling evidence to support the adoption of within-class instructional groups and the establishment of classroom routines. Those routines allow teachers to work in a focused way with small groups. The components of a good literacy strategy include a description of literacy needs linked to performance standards; teachers and students know what is expected; literacy learning should be regularly monitored and assessed; and good performance standards will reflect and illustrate a sound literacy strategy.
- Literacy instruction needs to occur across the curriculum.
- The principal needs a school-wide literacy strategic plan aimed at improving student achievement.
- Participants will augment/refine their Action Learning Project and create a plan for excellence in literacy at their school.

Unit 6: Leadership for Excellence in Mathematics

The aim of this unit is not to make principals math experts, but rather to enable principals to recognize the key elements of best instructional practices in the field of mathematics—from basic skills to problem solving to conceptual understanding. The

principal must be comfortable and confident in judging whether the school has an effective mathematics program and be able to lead continuous improvements in it. To that end, the unit brings the principal deep into math instruction in the classroom and provides video and role-playing opportunities for observations and coaching moments between the teachers and the principal. The unit also includes instruction to enable the participants to recognize excellence in safety net programs in mathematics. The principal must know how to put such a program in place to make sure that all students have the necessary mathematical skills, no matter what level they had when they entered the school.

Topics: findings and recommendations from TIMSS and PISA; best practices in math teaching; characteristics of effective math classroom teaching; analyzing math lessons; evaluating math programs; Standards of Learning for mathematics; the current state of math content; instructional leadership in math; and math leadership strategies.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- US math curriculum often includes: content repetitive over the years, too many topics, consequential topics neglected, and level of content too low.
- The principal needs to set up processes within the school to ensure continuous improvement in math teaching and learning.
- Schools must create a rigorous math program based on clearly defined standards--allowing all students to succeed in math.
- Principals need to take a balanced approach to math education: skills, problem-solving, and conceptual understanding—not just skills.
- Characteristics of effective school principals: remain focused on student learning and achievement, promote a positive culture of learning around math, examine the relevance of the curriculum, make math activities a priority, drive for results in math, and lead from behind.
- The principal needs a school-wide math strategic plan aimed at improving student achievement and including skills/concepts, problem solving, and conceptual understanding.
- Participants will augment/refine their Action Learning Project and create a plan for excellence in math at their school.

Unit 7: Leadership for Excellence in Science

The goal of this unit is to enable principals to identify, implement, and support instructional activities for science education by using creative and innovative instructional leadership and distributed leadership principles. During the unit, principals will focus on the beliefs, behaviors, and consequences that characterize the present circumstances for science education in their schools as well as those across the nation.

The main sessions of the unit include an assessment of the current science education context, performance standards, assessment and accountability, improved instruction and leadership practices, teacher capacity, professional development, and action planning. Principals will also engage in several hands-on experiments to illustrate the articulation of science concepts across grade levels.

Topics: Next Generation Science standards; evidence-based explanation; inquiry; engagement with phenomena; conceptual understanding; TIMMS results for science; sample science lessons; American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) benchmarking maps; backward design in science; reform-based science teaching

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- Engaging students and teachers with science education is critical to the continued economic, social, and technological leadership of the United States.
- In leading change, the principal is accountable for getting the best instructional practices for science into the school along with the most capable science teachers.
- Although there has been some progress, the U.S. still lags behind a number of other industrialized nations in science education.
- Science instruction should consist of three components: evidence-based explanation, engagement with phenomena, and conceptual understanding.
- Interest in science and scientific literacy are cornerstones of supporting creativity and innovation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Excellent science instruction can keep students engaged in science and makes it more likely that they will pursue careers in STEM disciplines.
- The principal needs to create a school-wide science strategic plan aimed at improving student achievement and including skills/concepts, problem solving, and conceptual understanding.
- Participants will augment/refine their Action Learning Project and create a plan for excellence in science at their school.

Unit 8: Promoting Professional Learning and Phase I Simulation

This unit helps enable the participant to lead a school-wide effort to continuously develop the professional knowledge and skill of the faculty by establishing a culture in which every professional on the staff is expected to be learning all the time and in which professional development is seen by the whole faculty as the most important tool by which it acquires the skill and knowledge it needs to implement successfully the strategies and designs the school has adopted for improving student achievement.

Participants learn how to promote organizational learning through analysis of its successes and failures, through benchmarking best practices beyond the school and through disciplined searches for proven knowledge that bears on the challenges the school faces. Finally, the participant learns what to look for as he or she walks around the school and observes classrooms and how to use those observations as the basis for mentoring the faculty over time.

Topics: characteristics of effective professional development; principles of adult learning; characteristics of a learning organization; benchmarking; scientifically-based research; ESEA requirements for staff professional development; creating communities of practice; lesson study; mentoring and coaching; and leveraging staff to build organizational capacity.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- The principal must deeply understand the importance of creating a learning culture in schools—directed at improving student learning outcomes.
- The principal needs to deepen and weave in the relationship between principles of adult learning and the characteristics of effective professional development.
- Deep professional knowledge and the effective use of benchmarking and scientifically-based research should guide and enhance professional learning in schools.
- The principal should understand in detail how to align school needs to teacher development, creating a powerful professional development sequence for staff—connecting directly to classroom practice.
- Strategies the principal can use to create time for and promote professional learning among teachers include: learning communities, lesson study, mentoring and coaching.
- The Phase I computer-based simulation (Johnson Elementary School) provides participants an opportunity to apply their learnings from the NISL program by assuming the role of principal of an elementary school.

Coaching Institute: Using the roles of coaches in business and sports as a springboard for beginning this unit, participants quickly move to the role and need for coaches in education. An instructional coaching model is introduced, and participants have an opportunity to analyze and plan for a coaching situation based on a video of a first year teacher. The coaching unit is very interactive, allowing participants to engage in both individual and small group analysis using coaching scenarios and case study, as well as role-play in personal coaching situations that could occur in their schools. At the conclusion of this Institute, participants synthesize the concepts they have learned and

create a presentation designed to introduce instructional coaching to their staff. A final activity has participants discussing ideas for promoting a culture that encourages and enriches coaching in their schools.

Topics: instructional coaching process; beginning coaching practice; review of coaching skills; applying coaching tools; individual and group coaching analysis; advanced coaching practice; personal coaching situation; sample coaching culture; and coaching presentations.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- Coaching is a highly effective means of implementing instructional improvements. Coaching unlocks a person's potential to maximize performance and is critical to implementing change systemically.
- Instructional coaching is intentional and specific; it begins with a shared understanding of the school's goals for improving student achievement.
- Evidence about the specific issue needs to be gathered prior to initiating the coaching conversation.
- The coaching conversation provides an opportunity to reflect on teacher practice in relation to a specific focus and gathered data.
- The action plan should include specific steps to be followed, resources that will be provided, and follow-up measures.
- What gets monitored gets done.
- Sometimes, the most important role an instructional coach can take is to step back and view the situation from a perspective the teacher cannot see.

Course Three: Developing Capacity and Commitment

Unit 9: The Principal as Instructional Leader and Team Builder

This unit enables the participant to reflect on his or her role as an instructional leader and to learn how to play that role effectively, alone or in combination with other members of the leadership team. The participant looks back in time to understand how the role of the school principal came to be disassociated from instruction in the United States, as opposed to most other industrialized nations, and reflects on the forces now at work to restore the principal's role as instructional leader. The participant is introduced to a variety of ways in which the role of instructional leaders can be allocated among the people who together assume the function of the 'principalship,' and considers how best to distribute leadership and allocate responsibility in the school for this function. The unit also enables the participant to understand the power of teams to get the work of the school done and to develop the knowledge and skills needed to build high-performing teams. Participants learn how to define the goals for teams, recruit and select their members, and motivate and coach them to success.

Topics: instructional leaders' daily activities; creating a shared vision for student learning; ensuring the vision is designed and implemented to improve student learning; identifying and using leverage points; supporting teachers for instructional improvement; elementary math, secondary math, and applying instructional leadership; teams—criteria for success, charters, high-performing teams; improving organizational performance; sustaining high performance; professional learning communities; parental involvement; and success indicators.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- Principals are responsible for leading school improvement initiatives to implement sound instructional practices—role of “head teacher.”
- Principals must have a deep commitment to the idea that all students, with proper instruction, can meet internationally benchmarked standards, and it is the faculty’s responsibility to make this happen with the principal’s support.
- Principals must take the lead in designing and aligning school and classroom organization, curriculum, and resources to achieve the vision.
- Instructional leaders spend time in the classroom observing instructional practices and classroom dynamics, and they are able to evaluate instruction.
- Instructional improvement is not random; it is a discipline, a practice that requires focus, knowledge, persistence, and consistency over time.
- No one can implement instructional leadership alone. Principals must distribute some of the responsibilities of instructional leadership to the staff and community. “None of us is as smart as all of us.” (Warren Bennis)
- School-wide leadership teams join together teachers, administrators, parents, students, the community, and representatives of interested organizations to implement schoolwide programs and comprehensive school reform.

Unit 10: The Principal as Ethical Leader

This unit provides participants the opportunity to examine their roles as ethical leaders in their schools. Day-to-day pressures of being a principal, standards-based reforms, and new accountability requirements are fundamental conditions of the principal’s job. In many situations, principals are so pressured by operational demands that they lack time to think deeply about the ethical assumptions and implications of their decisions. Principals are not only responsible for their own ethical behavior but also must help create and nurture an ethical culture in each of their schools. The moral principles of a just, fair, and caring community are presented, and participants use these principles to guide their discussions and decisions about the several case studies used in this unit.

Topics: importance of ethics and ethical decision making in the schools; a just, fair, and caring community; bullying case study; community involvement (“Somos Uno” case study); resources and barriers to improvement in ethical dimensions of school culture; characteristics of a safe and effective school; defining moments come into each of our lives where ethical decisions must be made—from these we hope to experience moral growth and deep commitment.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- Too often principals are so pressured by the range of demands to get things done that they lack the time to deeply consider the ethical implications of their decisions.
- Principals are responsible not just for their own ethical behavior but also must create and nurture an ethical school community, consistently placing the interests of students above the interests of adults.
- Principals must place ethical growth and development at the top of the core missions in their schools.
- Principals are responsible for creating, nurturing, and sustaining a just, fair, and caring community.
- It is not enough for the principal to understand that a just, fair, and caring community is necessary for attaining high achievement by every student, but the principal must also create the strategies for developing, nurturing, and sustaining a community of learners and high student achievement.
- Moral dilemmas present themselves when two or more ethical principles conflict with one another, and there is no easy answer on which way to go.
- A just, fair, and caring school community does not just happen—the three qualities are always in tension and do not easily coexist.
- The principal needs to ask, “What *should* I do?” before “What *would* I do?” when confronted with ethical dilemmas.

Course Four: Driving for Results

Unit 11: The Principal as Driver of Change

This unit enables the participant to design, lead, and drive a change process calculated to produce steady improvement in student achievement. The participant learns to analyze the motivations of the various participants in the process, to identify friends and foes and to maximize the former at the expense of the latter over time, moving steadily from small wins to substantial gains. The principal should also learn how to identify root problems and causes, gather intelligence, and formulate a plan on the basis of appropriate data, set performance targets, select strategies and develop sound implementation plans.

Topics: High-risk changes needed; the Kotter model; overcoming barriers; identifying the stages of change; dealing with resistance; creating small wins and consolidating change; anchoring change in the culture; corporate case study; education case study; Bolman and Deal's four lenses; and managing change.

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- The principal plays a critical role in leading the systemic change needed to achieve high standards of academic, social, and ethical development for all students.
- Principals must understand when it is appropriate to take risks.
- Principals play a critical role in designing, implementing, and anchoring a change process.
- The purpose of leadership is not to produce consistency and order; rather, it is to produce movement and create change.
- Leadership focuses on strategies, creativity, and taking calculated risks, whereas management focuses on operational excellence and risk mitigation.
- Principals need to find a balance between when they need to lead and when they need to manage.
- To implement change, a principal must be able to analyze the root problems and causes, gather intelligence and formulate an appropriate plan, select strategies, set performance targets, and develop sound and sustainable implementation plans.
- There are barriers that are likely to be encountered in implementing improvements, and principals must know how to work with key stakeholders to overcome these barriers.
- Analyzing a change effort from the perspective of various stakeholders will help principals learn how to gain buy-in.
- Change is difficult and involves eight steps according to Kotter.
- When dealing with problems or issues that affect others, leaders need to consider multiple perspectives.

Unit 12: Leading for Results

The participant focuses on the crucial role of data in the drive for results: setting goals and monitoring progress; collecting, displaying and analyzing data on program implementation and student progress in relation to standards; allocating and reallocating resources; and managing the school program. The participant integrates materials from earlier units that relates to the crucial role of the principal in providing a vision of the results worth achieving, keeping that vision constantly in front of the school community and allocating responsibilities to everyone involved for realizing that vision.

Topics: using multiple sources and types of data to assess school-level, sub-group level, and individual student performance; data categories; ESEA requirements; growth models; continuous results management; root cause analysis; data in your school/division; increased teacher ownership; education case studies

Selected Main Themes/Concepts:

- An intelligent and comprehensive use of data is key to meeting the challenge of improving student learning.
- Data is a powerful management tool to guide the sustained improvement of instructional practice and student learning. The intelligent use of data is key to any instructional leader's success in leading for results.
- Continuous results management.
- Effective school leaders create a culture where educators are comfortable with and knowledgeable about data used to determine a school's strengths and weaknesses.
- School leaders and teachers, to be instructionally effective, must "own" the school's data and this ownership develops from joint inquiry in understanding and analyzing the data.
- School leaders must depict data in a simple, meaningful format for analysis and communication to the school community

Unit 13: Culminating Simulation

The culminating simulation draws together all the major themes of NISL into a two-day experience for participants. The computer-assisted simulation starts with a case study on Greenwood Middle School, including ten pages of student data and background data on school history and stakeholders that participants study in-depth before the exercise begins. The exercise itself requires players to make choices in response to questions and issues that are related to the scenario and to prior decisions. The responses follow a cause-and-effect chain of logic down six levels of relationships—such that choices made later in the exercise are delimited by earlier decisions. There are five areas of issues related to the analysis of data, strategic thinking, distributed leadership, literacy (a main focus in the scenario), and coherence/alignment of all the elements of a standards-based system. There are also expert commentaries on video that are used to advance the discussion of each issue. On the second day, participants create two layers of the exercise themselves, based on an update (three years after the events in the main case study). A culminating activity enables participants to summarize their learning and identify next steps based on their training with NISL's Executive Development Program.

APPENDIX E

Commonly Asked Questions

Question How comprehensive is the Executive Development Program?

Answer NISL’s Executive Development Program is the most comprehensive professional development training currently available for principals. The program builds leadership skills found in many top business and military programs, provides a strong foundation in the best practices of standards-based education, while also giving participants the ability to identify and coach towards strong instruction in the content areas.

Q What is the purpose of this program?

A NISL believes that effective and creative leadership results in greatly improved practice by principals and higher achievement for all students. The Executive Development Program addresses a comprehensive set of leadership skills, issues, and challenges intended to dramatically improve instruction in the classroom and the practice of school leadership. The objective is to move good schools to great and to turn around low-performing schools.

Q What is the time commitment leaders need to make to participate?

A The total commitment is about 30 days and takes place over 12 to 18 months. Most face-to-face training takes place in two-day units, delivered approximately monthly. VFEL works with divisions to maximize efficient delivery, scheduling around testing periods, and leveraging summer training schedules. If requested, starting later in the day or scheduling weekend sessions is also possible.

Q Can NISL programs be used as credits for graduate school degrees?

A Yes. NISL partners with several colleges and universities so that participants can receive graduate school credit. For example, Nova Southeastern University waives approximately one-third of the credit towards a doctorate for participants in the Executive Development Program.

Q Will NISL training support career advancement?

A Yes. NISL programs help current school leaders become more effective in that role—and they are an excellent credential for aspiring school leaders to move into leadership positions. Some states and divisions require aspiring leaders to complete NISL training to move into leadership positions. Partner universities also waive credits towards doctorates and advanced certifications. NISL training has been instrumental to many school leaders in advancing to division or state leadership positions.

Q What is the purpose of the Institutes? What issues are addressed?

A The Institutes are designed to give principals the tools they need to address key leadership issues faced by most principals. The institutes strive to further enhance leadership skills of leaders beyond the Educational Development Program. Examples of institutes are the Coaching Institute and the Facilitators Institute.

Q What is the time commitment for institutes?

A NISL's Institutes consist of 2 to 4.5 days of class time, usually on consecutive days. Prior to the Institute, participants must complete several assignments— such as a school assessment, student interviews, readings, or interactive computer-based activities— lasting a total of 2 to 4 hours.

APPENDIX F

Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of Virginia Educators to Participate in the Executive Development Program

NISL's programs are designed to be delivered to cohorts of leaders across a school division or state. Most often the target audience includes principals and aspiring administrators, but may also include teacher leaders, other members of school leadership teams, or division staff. The school division and state leaders contract with VFEL to deliver the NISL Executive Development Program to groups of participants to receive training. Participants are selected by the division superintendent working in concert with VFEL. Participants in the first and second cohorts included principals of schools in improvement, teacher leaders, and central office staff. Individual school leaders interested in participating in NISL should contact their school division to explore opportunities for VFEL to support their division.

VFEL and NISL believe that effective and creative leadership results in greatly improved practice by principals and higher achievement for all students. The Executive Development Program addresses a comprehensive set of leadership skills, issues and challenges intended to dramatically improve instruction in the classroom and the practice of school leadership. The objective is to help make good schools great and to turn around low-performing schools.

NISL draws on the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards; standards of the major associations of principals and administrators; and the performance standards for major themes within the Institutes and Executive Development Program. While NISL aligns programs with state leadership standards and evaluations, NISL also collaborates with VFEL to identify additional leadership standards or needs of individual school divisions.

VFEL and NISL employ two methods to train participants—direct training or train-the-trainer. With direct training, certified NISL faculty members train participants directly as is the model in Virginia. Under the train-the-trainer model, VFEL faculty members who have been trained in NISL's Executive Development Program train local leaders (selected by the division or state), who become certified to provide training in their division using NISL's world-class curriculum.

NISL faculty members are carefully selected to match the needs of the division or state. In Virginia all faculty members are successful, highly experienced educators who have been principals or superintendents. When possible, some NISL units are co-facilitated by successful leaders from the military, business or government.

APPENDIX G
Alignment of NISL Executive Development Program
and
Principal of Distinction (Level II) Administration and Supervision
Endorsement

In September 2012, the Virginia Board of Education approved “Advancing Virginia’s Leadership Agenda Guidance Document: Standards and Indicators for School Leaders and Documentation for the Principal of Distinction (Level II) Administration and Supervision Endorsement.” As noted in the document, a building-level administrator is eligible for the Principal of Distinction (Level II) recognition after being a building-level administrator for five years and completing a formal induction program as a principal or assistant principal. After meeting these criteria, the administrator must meet two or more of the criteria specified by the Virginia Board of Education and be nominated by the division superintendent. The criteria include the following:

- Evidence of improved student achievement;
- Evidence of effective instructional leadership;
- Evidence of positive effect on school climate or culture;
- Earned doctorate in educational leadership or evidence of professional development in the areas of school law, school finance, supervision, human resource management, and instructional leadership; or
- Evidence of completion of a high-quality professional development project designed by the division superintendent.

NISL’s Executive Development Program is an unrivaled comprehensive and high-quality professional development program that has been proven to strengthen the instructional leadership of aspiring and current school leaders. Participants attend 27 days with 13 units of study that go beyond the traditional “sit and get” format. The program is designed in the format of the “flipped classroom”: participants complete 2-4 hours of online instruction per unit in addition to extensive reading assignments of current research in education and leadership. Their learning is applied during full-day unit sessions as a basis for further exploration, high level discussions, applications to current school situations, and interactive implementation of their learning. Participants engage in a variety of activities to cement their learning, including data analysis, role playing, practice, and simulations. Each participant is challenged each session with each learning activity, with the focus and goal always in mind: “every student, every period, every day.” Successful completion of the NISL Executive Development Program meets criterion 5 regarding the “completion of a high-quality professional development project.”

Each participant is required to strategically develop and implement an Action Learning Plan (ALP). Before determining the ALP, each participant collects and analyzes a variety of data pertinent to his/her school. Working with school-based leaders and colleagues in the Executive Development Program cohort, the participant identifies the concentration of his/her ALP, focusing on improvements in student achievement, instructional leadership, school climate, or school culture. Throughout the program, participants share progress with their ALPs, garnering additional views and challenges from colleagues in the cohort. The facilitators of the program consistently monitor the progress of each participant's ALP, providing feedback and guidance with the action learning plans throughout the process. Successful completion of the Action Learning Plan provides evidence that could meet either criterion 1) improved student achievement, 2) effective instructional leadership, or 3) positive effect on school climate or culture.

NISL's Executive Development Program emphasizes the role of principals as strategic thinkers, instructional leaders, and creators of a just, fair and caring culture in which all students meet high standards. It ensures that school leaders can competently and effectively set direction for teachers, support their staffs, and design an efficient organization. It also focuses on the critical content areas of literacy, math, and science. Once principals have earned a certificate from VFEL showing successful completion of the NISL Executive Development Program, they should be recognized as Principals of Distinction (Level II).

Principals who utilize the NISL Executive Development Program for Principals of Distinction (Level II) recognition would have to meet the minimum eligibility criteria set forth in the regulations. They will have been a building administrator for five years and will have successfully completed a formal induction program as a principal or assistant principal. Per VFEL's selection process, the eligible principals would have the support of division superintendents to participate in NISL training and pursue a Level II endorsement.

The NISL Executive Development Program provides job-embedded training for principals and draws on the best leadership development techniques from a variety of fields – including education, the military, business, law, and medicine.

The NISL program includes 13 months (27 days) of face-to-face instruction, online work and readings, and development and implementation of an action learning project (ALP). Units include the following:

- Unit 1: The Educational Challenge
- Unit 2: The Principal as Strategic Thinker
- Unit 3: Standards-based Instructional Systems and School Design

- Unit 4: Foundations of Effective Learning
- Unit 5: Leadership for Excellence in Literacy
- Unit 6: Leadership for Excellence in Math
- Unit 7: Leadership for Excellence in Science
- Unit 8: Promoting Professional Learning
- Unit 9: The Principal as Instructional Leader and Team Builder
- Unit 10: The Principal as Ethical Leader
- Unit 11: The Principal as Driver of Change
- Unit 12: Leading for Results
- Unit 13: Culminating Simulation

The NISL program is connected to the existing five criteria already approved by the Board of Education and, in many ways, goes beyond minimum expectations. Justification for why this program meets the criteria for Principal of Distinction (Level II) certification is bulleted below:

- Evidence of improved student achievement;
 - NISL’s Executive Development Program has been highlighted in several studies on school performance conducted by Johns Hopkins and Old Dominion Universities. A rigorous, quasi-experimental research study evaluated 38 elementary and middle schools in Massachusetts that were led by NISL trained principals. “The results indicated that the NISL-led schools achieved statistically significantly higher student achievement in both mathematics and ELA versus the comparison group. The effect size was .14 in math and .11 in ELA. This translates into an average of more than a month of additional learning for all students in the 38 schools versus what would have been expected without the NISL EDP intervention.”
 - A scientifically rigorous study compared student achievement gains in 101 schools led by NISL-trained principals with those of comparison schools that were matched in initial performance and demographic factors. Statistically significant student achievement gains were found in both English language arts and mathematics at all school levels. Proficiency in math at the high school level, a particularly hard-to-impact segment, grew an astounding 9.48%. The researchers concluded: “The results of this study represent highly promising evidence that the NISL Executive Development Program for School Leaders results in statistically significant, substantial, and sustained improvements in student performance in reading and mathematics, particularly in the challenging context of secondary schools. This is particularly noteworthy given that the program is highly cost-effective.”

- Evidence of effective instructional leadership;
 - Each participant is required to develop an Action Learning Project (ALP). During the training, participants complete an Instructional Leadership Instrument (ILI) and a self-assessment of leadership strengths and weaknesses. They also conduct a gap analysis of their schools' curriculum to determine where change needs to occur if the school is to move forward. Using this information, along with other NISL materials, participants develop, commit to, and implement an action learning plan (ALP) that will lead to improvement for their schools. The purpose of the plan is to improve instruction and learning within the building or division. Once developed the ALP must be approved by the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership and the superintendent, or his designee, of the school division.

- Evidence of positive effect on school climate or culture;
 - The unit on educational challenge begins with the recurring theme of developing and implementing a vision and mission based on a set of underlying beliefs that drives the school. NISL has established criteria for a school vision which are designed to positively affect the climate and culture within the building. The criteria include the following: achievable/doable; focused on results -- leads to accountability; measurable; simple/clear; actionable; lends itself to developing a clear strategy -- makes the vision possible; leads to hard choices; and worth fighting for. In addition, the units on team building and driving change are directly related to school climate and culture. Furthermore, the unit on ethical leadership underscores that it is not enough for the principal to understand that a just, fair, and caring community is necessary for attaining high achievement by every student, but the principal must also create the strategies for developing, nurturing, and sustaining a community of learners and high student achievement.

- Earned doctorate in educational leadership or evidence of professional development in the areas of school law, school finance, supervision, human resource management, and instructional leadership; or
 - While NISL's Executive Development Program does not result in an earned doctoral degree, it is the equivalent of 12 hours of additional graduate work based on the standard of 45 hours of work for each graduate credit. Several universities around the nation waive graduate credit hours for successful completion of the NISL Executive Development Program as it includes significant instruction related to supervision, human resource management, instructional leadership, and ethical leadership.

- NISL participants will have a Level I Administration and Supervision endorsement, which requires completion of the related coursework or professional development.
- Evidence of completion of a high-quality professional development project designed by the division superintendent.
 - As evidenced by the research, quality of the program, success in other states, and success of those who have completed the program, the NISL Executive Development Program is one of the best professional development programs in the country. It clearly meets this element of the criteria. It also fosters collaboration between principals and other school leaders – each cohort is a cohesive unit that provides expertise and collaboration that extends beyond what may be available to each leader in his or her current division. This collaboration includes the sharing of best practices and problem solving. As noted earlier, participants are required to develop and implement an Action Learning Project that forwards the vision and goals of the school and student achievement. As the ALP occurs throughout the length of the training program, participants have the time to utilize strategic planning methods and progress through the continuous improvement cycle. Job-embedded, research-based, collaborative, data-rich, timely – the NISL Executive Development Program is what true professional learning and development should be.
 - Per an agreement between VFEL and the division superintendent, the high-quality professional development project will be satisfied through successful completion of the NISL training program.

Considering the information provided above, eligible principals who successfully complete the NISL Executive Development Program will minimally meet the criteria for Principal of Distinction (Level II) by virtue of meeting criteria 4 and 5 in the existing regulatory requirements.

A recent Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) Report (June 9, 2014) noted that schools in Virginia that are achieving despite the odds do a number of things differently (p.21) including:

- Using recommended instructional practices more consistently than lower performing schools;
- Supporting the many needs of students;
- Providing additional support for students;
- Regularly analyzing student performance data, monitoring, and adjusting instruction;

- Providing timely remediation for students;
- Using formative assessments;
- Creating opportunities for teachers to work together in planning;
- Providing regular professional development;
- Having principals who are instructional leaders who promote instructional practice through professional development and coaching; and
- Providing quality feedback to teachers.

The above list from the JLARC study could have been taken directly from the NISL Executive Development Program. All of the above are part of the program.