Educational Leadership Faculty Response to Iowa Department of Education’s Administrator Evaluation Task Force Final Report

Discussion held October 23, 2012

Faculty Members Present:
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The faculty members acknowledge the time, thought and dedication demonstrated by the Task Force as they worked to recommend a statewide administrator evaluation system that standardizes the instruments and processes used by school districts, charter schools, and accredited nonpublic schools. We thank them for their extensive research, hours of discussion and final report.

Overall, much of the Task Force recommendations are not much different than the current process that aligns performance with the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL). We are pleased that the Task Force recommended the continued application of ISSL. The recommendation to tighten the formative and summative tools to include a 360-degree feedback component tied to ISSL and building, district, and individual professional goals and a research and development component that will be used to make systems improvement is fully supported by our faculty members. We, like the Task Force, have also seen the need to have well defined descriptors for administrator performance and a much more standardized approach throughout the state. Our faculty members were also pleased to see the SO THEN in the Principals Effectiveness System Theory of Action that shined the light on student learning will increase. (p.14)

Some areas that we might question or would like additional information or discussion include:

1. The Administrator Evaluation process seems entirely focused on the building principal. What are the thoughts about the framework for evaluation of superintendents? How might the Iowa School Board Association be involved?
2. As we think about the entire system of evaluation and continuous improvement, it seemed as though much of the responsibility for low performing schools fell on the principal. Likewise, under the theory of action on page 14 (if principals are provided the system supports necessary to remove incompetent teachers), it seems like the principal is the person who removes incompetent teachers. Why is the principal the only person identified in this process? The roles of the superintendent and the school board should be acknowledged in this process.
3. Another “if” on page 13 states “If principals who are in under-performing schools are supported with executive coaches who support the principals in the work of building collective capacity around targeted learning goals” begs the question, why wait until a school becomes under-performing to provide the principal with the executive coach? Why shouldn’t all principals have this opportunity?

In conclusion, we appreciate the contributions of the Task Force to bring forth ways to improve the process of administrator evaluation with an emphasis on growth and improvement, not punishment.