

Putting Professional Learning to Work

What Principals Do with Their Executive Development Program Learning—Appendix

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Preface

This technical appendix accompanies the report *Putting Professional Learning to Work: What Principals Do with Their Executive Development Program Learning* (available at www.rand.org/t/RR3082). The main report presents findings from part of RAND's evaluation of the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)'s Executive Development Program (EDP), a leadership program for sitting school principals. This appendix describes the methods we employed and the data we collected to examine how principals applied their EDP learning and coaching to their work as school leaders.

We draw on a survey of 172 EDP participants, phone interviews of 74 principals, and nine in-depth case studies to examine what improvement efforts principals with EDP experience attempted in their schools and what strategies they applied to reach their goals. Our findings are intended to be of interest to district and state education agency administrators, to school leaders implementing similar improvement efforts, and to NISL.

This appendix is organized into sections based on the three types of data we collected and analyzed: surveys of school principals, interviews of school principals, and case studies of nine schools where principals had taken the NISL EDP. In each section, we summarize the sample of principals or schools in the data collection, describe our methods for analyzing the data, and provide some findings in addition to the main ones we include in the *Putting Professional Learning to Work* report.

The study was undertaken by RAND Education and Labor, a division of the RAND Corporation that conducts research on early childhood through postsecondary education programs, workforce development, and programs and policies affecting workers, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy and decisionmaking. This study was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education via its Investing in Innovation and Supporting Effective Educator Development grant programs.

More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about this report should be directed to ewang@rand.org, and questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

Contents

Preface	iii
Tables	v
1. School Principal Survey Data, Analysis, and Additional Findings	1
Data Collection and Analysis	1
Sample	2
Additional Findings from the Survey	2
2. School Principal Interviews Data, Analysis, and Additional Findings	4
Data Collection	4
Sample	4
Data Analysis	5
Additional Findings from Interviews	6
3. Case Study Selection, Analysis, and Additional Findings	12
Case Selection	12
Data Collection	14
Data Analysis	14
Additional Findings from the Case Study Analysis	15
4. School Principal Phone Interview Protocol	18
Consent Script	18
Interview Protocol	19
5. Select Case Study Data Collection Protocols	22
Principal Interview (Initial Site Visit)	22
Coach Interview (Initial Interview)	28

Tables

Table A.1. Characteristics of Survey Sample ($N = 172$)	2
Table A.2. Reported Adoption of Concepts from the Executive Development Program ($N = 172$)	3
Table A.3. Characteristics of Interview Sample ($N = 74$)	5
Table A.4. “How did the EDP change your practice or qualities?” and “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from the EDP, if any?” ($N = 74$).....	7
Table A.5. “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from NISL coaching, if any?” ($N = 57$)	8
Table A.6. “What was the most beneficial activity you did with your coach?” ($N = 57$)	9
Table A.7. “How can the EDP be improved?” ($N = 74$)	10
Table A.8. “How can coaching be improved?” ($N = 57$)	10
Table A.9. Snapshot of the Nine Cases	13

1. School Principal Survey Data, Analysis, and Additional Findings

Data Collection and Analysis

We fielded a survey to all principals participating in the studies associated with the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grants described in the main report. As described in the main report, across the studies, principals were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: receive the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) Executive Development Program (EDP) alone, receive the EDP and EDP-aligned coaching, and “business-as-usual.” In the main report and this appendix, we focus on those respondents who had received the EDP and/or coaching. To field the survey, we sent principals emails and hard-copy letters inviting them to take the survey electronically or by paper, and we offered a \$10 pre-completion gift card and a \$20 post-completion gift card as an incentive to respond. We sent up to three hard-copy mailings and up to five follow-up emails to principals who did not respond to the initial invitation. Overall, 172 principals who had participated in the EDP and/or coaching completed the survey, with a response rate of 63 percent. On average, the survey respondents completed 11.2 units of the EDP, with 88 percent of them completing ten or more units.

The survey contained three sets of questions relevant to this report. On a four-point scale (“Not at all,” “Very little,” “Somewhat,” “To a great extent”), principals responded about the extent to which (1) the NISL EDP courses helped them to lead their school better, (2) they would recommend the EDP to a friend who is a principal, and (3) creating and implementing their Action Learning Project (ALP) improved their school.

Principals also reported the extent to which they adopted certain listed key concepts from the EDP on a four-point scale (“No change; this is not a focus in my school,” “No change; this was already a focus in my school,” “Adopted or increased to some extent,” “Adopted or increased to a great extent”). See Table A.2 for the items and results.

Finally, we included three items about coaching in the version of the survey that we fielded with all those assigned a NISL coach. We asked NISL-coached principals to rate on a four-point scale (“Not at all,” “Very little,” “Somewhat,” “To a great extent”) the extent to which (1) the coach was knowledgeable about school improvement work, (2) coaching was more valuable than the EDP itself for helping them to improve their school, and (3) the coach helped them to improve their school. For each survey item, we examined and reported the proportion of principals who selected each response option.

Sample

The 172 survey respondents consisted of 68 principals from Kentucky, 49 from Mississippi, 23 from Pennsylvania, 17 from Florida, and 15 from California. The principals averaged 5.2 years of experience as a principal at the start of the study (range = 1 to 17). Among the total survey respondents, 101 principals received coaching in addition to the EDP. There were 85 elementary, 61 middle, and 26 high schools represented in the sample, with school classifications determined by a combination of school grade spans and names. Table A.1 provides characteristics of the survey sample.

Table A.1. Characteristics of Survey Sample (N = 172)

Characteristic	Number of Principals
Total	172
Average years of experience	5.2 years
Range of years of experience	1 to 17 years
Principals who received NISL coaching	101
Breakdown by school level	
Elementary	85
Middle	61
High	26

Additional Findings from the Survey

To supplement the findings discussed in the main report, we present here the results from the balance of the survey items we list in the data collection section above. Eighty-six percent of 172 respondents believed that “Creating and implementing my Action Learning Project (ALP) improved my school” somewhat (40 percent) or to a great extent (46 percent). In reflecting on the coaching they received, 98 percent of the 101 respondents indicated that their coach was knowledgeable about school improvement work “somewhat” (11 percent) or “to a great extent” (87 percent). Furthermore, 96 percent indicated that the coach helped to improve their school “somewhat” (26 percent) or “to a great extent” (70 percent).

Finally, at least 76 percent of respondents reported that they adopted or increased to “some extent” or “a great extent” each of the seven key concepts/practices from the EDP we asked about that are listed in Table A.2. In the main report, we highlight three findings that particularly reflected key themes that emerged from the case studies. These related to facilitating distributed leadership; employing the tenets of “How People Learn” to drive the development and alignment of curricula, instruction, and assessments; and aligning teachers’ instructional activities within and across subjects and grade levels. In addition to these practices, surveyed principals reported that they applied ways of thinking that stemmed from the EDP. For example, 85 percent of

principals increased to some or a great extent the practice of examining context, assumptions, interests, capabilities, and risks when developing a strategy for school change, and 81 percent reported applying the idea of “all means all”—an equity-driven lens that focuses on ensuring that all students have access to high-quality learning opportunities—to make decisions at their school. In Table A.2, we present the full findings.

Table A.2. Reported Adoption of Concepts from the Executive Development Program (N = 172)

	No change; this is not a focus in my school	No change; this was already a focus in my school	Adopted or increased to some extent	Adopted or increased to a great extent
When I develop a strategy for my school, I examine context, assumptions, interests, capabilities, and risks.	4%	11%	48%	37%
I have taken steps to better align teachers' instructional activities within and across subjects and grade levels.	2%	13%	49%	35%
I employ the tenets of “How People Learn” to drive the development and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments.	8%	9%	56%	27%
I routinely apply the idea of “all means all” to make decisions at my school.	4%	13%	41%	41%
I use teams to facilitate distributed leadership.	1%	20%	38%	41%
I use the NISL Wheel to decide how to change the systems at my school.	13%	9%	59%	19%
I have worked to align curriculum and assessments to high performance standards.	1%	23%	44%	32%

2. School Principal Interviews Data, Analysis, and Additional Findings

Data Collection

We recruited all principals in the i3 and SEED studies who had completed at least ten of the full 12 units of the EDP to participate in 30- to 45-minute phone interviews from December 2018 through February 2019. Principals received an email inviting them to participate and offering a \$100 Amazon electronic gift card as an incentive. We sent two follow-up emails to principals who did not respond to the initial email. Overall, 74 of the 153 principals whom we invited completed an interview, for a participation rate of 48 percent.

The interview protocol was semistructured in nature, including a combination of closed- and open-ended questions to facilitate comparisons across principals while remaining open to emergent themes. The interview protocol asked principals to rate their satisfaction with the EDP, coaching, and the ALP; to explain those ratings; to reflect on top lessons learned from the EDP and coaching; to recall the main areas for school improvement that they worked on during the EDP; and to explain how, if at all, the EDP and coaching influenced their work. See section 4 of this appendix for the protocol.

A team of three researchers conducted the interviews, which were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The researchers also made notes in an Excel spreadsheet during the interviews to track principals' responses to closed-ended items (e.g., years of experience as a principal, years participating in the EDP, level of agreement with statements about the EDP and coaching) to facilitate analysis.

We note two limitations in our data: (1) Our data are qualitative in nature and self-reports, and (2) because we spoke with individuals who self-selected into the study by agreeing to the interview, their views may not necessarily represent the views of all principals who experienced the EDP, including principals who were invited to participate in the study but did not.

Sample

The interview sample consisted of 40 male and 34 female principals. There were 29 principals from Kentucky, 17 from Mississippi, 13 from Pennsylvania, 9 from California, and 6 from Florida. There were 35 elementary, 21 middle, and 14 high schools in the sample. Four schools were some combination of elementary, middle, and high school and did not receive a school level classification. Using the county-level urbanicity classification designated by the

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,¹ there were 46 urban, 16 rural, and 12 suburban schools in the sample.

Principals who completed the EDP during the grant cycle had an average of 4.3 years of experience prior to beginning the EDP, with a range of one to 17 years of experience.²

Table A.3 summarizes these characteristics.

Table A.3. Characteristics of Interview Sample (N = 74)

Characteristic	Number of Principals
Total	74
Average years of experience ^a	4.3 years
Range of years of experience	1 to 17 years
Principals who received NISL coaching	57
Breakdown by school level	
Elementary	35
Middle	21
High	14
Breakdown by urbanicity	
Urban	46
Rural	16
Suburban	12

^a Averages and ranges do not count the group of principals who participated and completed the EDP prior to the start of the SEED and i3 grant cycle.

Data Analysis

Our primary goals for analyzing the principal interview data were to (1) synthesize across the interviews to identify emergent themes regarding principals’ perceptions and the influence of the EDP and coaching and (2) determine how, if at all, these themes relate to different subgroups, including school level and geography. We uploaded the interview transcripts into Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software, to facilitate analysis. Three researchers collaborated to analyze the data.

¹ *Urban* is classified as (1) Metro: counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more, (2) Metro: counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population, and (3) Metro: counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population. *Suburban* is classified as (1) Nonmetro: urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area, (2) Nonmetro: urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area, and (3) Nonmetro: urban population of 2,500 to 19,999 or more, not adjacent to a metro area. *Rural* is classified as (1) Nonmetro: urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area, (2) Nonmetro: completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area, and (3) Nonmetro: completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area.

² Averages and ranges do not count the group of principals who participated and completed the EDP prior to the start of the SEED and i3 grant cycle.

To analyze closed-ended questions in which principals provided answers within a range of choices, we generated descriptive statistics. To analyze responses to open-ended items, we coded the interview transcripts in Dedoose. Two of the researchers who had collected the data reviewed interview notes in the Excel spreadsheet and select interview transcripts, performed open coding of emergent themes related to the value of the EDP, the value of coaching, the most beneficial coaching activities, school improvement activities, and suggestions for improving coaching and the EDP. The researchers clustered these emergent themes into coding schemes. The two researchers met with the larger research team to discuss the emergent themes and draft codes, refine rules around their use, and reach consensus about how the codes should be applied. During coding, the team of three researchers had ongoing conversations about how text should be coded, modifying the coding scheme and discussing questions until consensus was reached.

Once the researchers had coded all interview transcripts in Dedoose, they explored the relative frequencies of each code to understand the prominence of each emergent theme. The researchers reviewed coded excerpts by theme using Dedoose to add context and more deeply understand the ways in which principals thought about each theme. To explore whether subgroup differences influenced principals perceptions and the influence of the EDP and coaching, the researchers created tables to explore the prevalence of each theme by subgroups, including school level and geography. Researchers compared the prevalence of themes in each subgroup with the overall prevalence to detect salient differences.

Additional Findings from Interviews

In addition to the findings discussed in the main report, we also asked a series of questions intended to help NISL refine the EDP and its coaching model.

Value of the Action Learning Project

We asked interviewees how much they agreed with the statement “The ALP I completed as part of the EDP was worthwhile.” Fifty-six principals answered, and, among them, 4 percent strongly disagreed, 9 percent disagreed, 29 percent agreed, and 59 percent strongly agreed. Overall, 88 percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed.

The ALP was an opportunity for principals to apply their EDP learning to their school improvement effort. Principals largely expressed that the ALP served its purpose by helping them to make their plans more concrete and structured and holding them accountable for following through. The ALP also helped principals learn how to prioritize areas for improvement in a strategic way. Several principals described a tendency to want to take on too many changes at once and believed that the ALP guided them to think about which changes to take on first in order to affect other aspects of the school system. For example, one principal learned to prioritize personnel issues before tackling instructional change. For many, the coach helped them navigate

the requirements of the ALP, access relevant resources, and connect EDP concepts to their schools.

Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed that the ALP was valuable generally expressed a disconnect between the ALP and the needs of their school, or felt that the ALP required too much work. For instance, one principal was dismayed that the ALP implementation timeline did not align with their school-year calendar, making the ALP feel disconnected and superficial. The principal felt that it was not feasible to revise staffing or professional development structures or events once the school year had started, though these may have been ideal ALP implementation strategies.

How the Executive Development Program Changed Principals' Practice

Table A.4 presents the most common answers principals provided to the questions “How did the EDP change your practice or qualities?” and “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from the EDP, if any?”

Table A.4. “How did the EDP change your practice or qualities?” and “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from the EDP, if any?” (N = 74)

The EDP helped principals . . .	Percentage of Principals Who Reported This as a Top Lesson
Think more strategically/be more intentional in their leadership approach	35%
Develop more collaborative/distributed leadership in their schools	24%
Understand how teachers or students learn	23%
Other	19%
Think more "big picture"	14%
Develop a positive school culture	9%
Focus more on instructional leadership and less on managerial tasks	8%
Use more data	7%
Consider equity for students/"all means all"	5%
Reinforce current practices	5%
EDP provided resources	4%
None/Did not change practice	0%

Besides the three most frequently cited lessons discussed in the main report, other responses included engaging in more “big picture” thinking (14 percent), prioritizing school culture (9 percent), and focusing more on instructional and less on managerial aspects of leadership (8 percent). “Big picture” thinking included concepts such as long-range planning; looking at improvement efforts more holistically within the context of the school, district, and community;

and considering how schools can borrow lessons learned from other countries. One principal described how the EDP helped him see how his school fit in the community and society at large,

My leadership prior was confined to the school site. I feel like through the EDP, I have a much broader understanding of what leadership means and how my leadership here at my school site has a ripple effect out into our community and across our nation. Unit one [of the EDP] did a great job of helping to set the context and the urgency for why we need to develop better leaders at our school site level. And so being able to go back and share some of that with stakeholders at my school site really helped to enhance our leadership ability and give us a better vision of where to move forward.

What Principals Valued Most from Coaching

Table A.5 presents the most common answers principals provided to the question “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from NISL coaching, if any?”

Table A.5. “What top three lessons or ideas have you used the most from NISL coaching, if any?” (N = 57)

NISL coach helped principals . . .	Percentage of Principals Who Reported This as a Top Lesson
Brainstorm ideas/serve as thought partner	26%
Think more strategically/more intentionally	25%
Embrace or create collaborative/shared leadership in their schools	14%
Use data for improvement	12%
Connect to resources	12%
Other	11%
Build a positive school culture	9%
Improve instructional leadership	9%

Besides the three most common answers presented in the main report, principals also mentioned that their coaches helped them use data for improvement (12 percent) and connected them to key resources (12 percent). For example, principals said their coach provided them curriculum materials, relevant research and articles, and examples of how other schools or districts implemented similar improvement efforts.

Moreover, several principals believed that, without coaching, the EDP resources and ALP would have felt disconnected from their school context; coaching was valuable for making this link. As one principal reported,

I think that [the ALP] wouldn’t have been worthwhile if I had not had the coaching. . . . It was because that coach was coming and helping, because my coach really cleared a lot of my questions and misconceptions and helped me find ways to incorporate [my] project into my everyday work and to my everyday

conversations with staff and things like that. So I would say without the coaching part, [the EDP resources] probably would've been a binder that got put back on the shelf.

Most Beneficial Coaching Activities

To understand what coaching-related activities principals valued, we asked, “What was the most beneficial activity you did with your coach?” Table A.6 provides the results.

Table A.6. “What was the most beneficial activity you did with your coach?” (N = 57)

Activity	Percentage of Principals Who Reported This as a Beneficial Activity
Discussing/brainstorming ideas and strategies with coach as thought partner	44%
Conducting classroom observations and debriefing together	18%
Learning about/gathering new resources	16%
Reviewing data together	12%
Other	12%
Strategizing about the ALP/receiving feedback on the plan	11%
Conducting team meeting observations together	9%
Co-leading/co-facilitating school-based activities	9%

As with the question about the value of coaching, principals overwhelmingly appreciated when the coach engaged in discussions and reflections with them in the role of a thought partner (44 percent). As the thought partner, the coach brainstormed ideas and strategies with principals, helped principals reflect on challenges, and connected EDP concepts and resources to their specific school context. Principals found this activity helpful because the coaches provided a neutral, third-party opinion on the schools’ challenges and solutions that principals used to guide their thinking and decisionmaking. Principals also reported that brainstorming and reflecting with their coaches helped keep them focused on their goals, particularly around the ALP. Principals (18 percent) also found it instructive when coaches co-observed classrooms or conducted walkthroughs with them. Through these activities, principals learned what to look for when observing teachers, strategies to improve teacher professional learning based on the observations, and how to debrief the observed teacher.

As for subgroups, rural principals were more likely to mention reviewing data together as a useful activity (30 percent) compared with all principals who received coaching (12 percent). Middle school principals were more likely to state that they found it beneficial when coaches shared resources (29 percent) compared with all principals who received coaching (16 percent).

Suggestions for Improving the Executive Development Program

Table A.7 presents the most common answers principals provided to the question “How can the EDP be improved?”

Table A.7. “How can the EDP be improved?” (N = 74)

Suggestion	Percentage of Principals Who Reported This Suggestion
Reduce time away from school	20%
Improve facilitators	16%
Reduce reading	14%
Condense EDP	14%
Explain value of EDP	8%
Spread out EDP	7%
Take EDP earlier in career	7%
Offer more networking	5%
Hold higher expectations for participants	5%

Suggestions for Improving Coaching

Table A.8 presents the most common answers principals provided to the question “How can coaching be improved?”

Table A.8. “How can coaching be improved?” (N = 57)

Suggestion	Percentage of Principals Who Reported This Suggestion
No suggested improvements	49%
Increase face-to-face time in schools	20%
Increase coaching duration	11%
Improve coaching match	5%
Increase frequency of sessions	4%
Clarify coaching expectations	4%

Principals had few to no suggestions for improving coaching. Almost half of the principals (49 percent) expressed that they were very pleased with their coaches and said they would not change anything about NISL coaching. Many of these principals underscored the importance of coaches being a good fit for the principal in terms of expertise, personality, and experience. Several principals appreciated that the coach took time getting to know the principal and his or her school before suggesting changes. Others appreciated having a coach who had experience serving as principal of a school at the same level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school). Of

the three principals (5 percent of principals who received coaching) who reported that their coaches were not a good match, one had a coach who taught high school whereas the principal had led an elementary school, and another had a coach with no experience as a principal.

The few suggestions principals did provide for improving coaching all revolved around increasing coaching or facilitating its delivery model. Eleven principals (20 percent) wished that their coaches were able to spend more face-to-face time in their schools. These principals believed that the time coaches spent in their schools led to valuable insights and getting to know the schools' contexts more deeply. Several of these principals reported that long travel times for coaches prevented them from having more frequent in-person meetings with their coach. Six principals (11 percent) wished that coaching could continue for a longer period of time.

3. Case Study Selection, Analysis, and Additional Findings

Case Selection

We conducted a set of nine case studies to understand and illustrate how principals with EDP experience and NISL coaching applied their learning to their school context through the Action Learning Project (ALP). We selected the nine principals for these case studies from 26 principals across five states that NISL facilitators and coaches nominated. To be nominated, principals had to have taken the EDP or the Bridging Institute no earlier than the 2015–2016 school year, consistently attended these EDP sessions, been engaged in coaching, and developed what NISL coaches deemed to be excellent plans for their ALP. Because of this selection process, the nine case studies illustrate best-case scenarios of EDP principals who received coaching and who enacted a strong initiative to improve their schools.

From the 26 nominations, we selected cases to show a variety of school improvement topics, from improving instructional quality in English language arts to increasing instructional leadership and teacher collaboration. We also selected cases to represent schools of different sizes, with different student demographics, from a variety of settings, of varied performance levels (e.g., low-performing to high-performing), and from all levels—elementary, middle, and high school. Table A.9 provides a snapshot of the nine cases.

Table A.9. Snapshot of the Nine Cases

Case Information		Principal Characteristics			School Characteristics (2016–2017 ^a)					
#	Title	Name ^b	Sex	Years as Principal Prior to EDP	Locale	Size	% Nonwhite	% FRPL	Grade Level	Performance Level ^c
1	Shaping a standards-aligned instructional system through formative assessment practices	Owen Walter	M	3	Urban	900	66%	60%	Middle	High
2	Building a collaborative, data-driven culture to improve instructional quality	Joseph Hollister	M	5	Urban	400	58%	83%	Middle	Medium
3	Building a culture and capacity for collaboration to foster instructional improvement	William Henderson	M	0	Urban	1,300	59%	32%	Middle	High
4	Raising school culture and student achievement through a focus on writing	Megan Armstrong	F	2	Urban	400	64%	81%	Elem.	Low
5	Implementing teacher-centered learning to elevate engagement in a high-performing high school	Ray Myerson	M	2	Suburban	1,500	5%	34%	High	High
6	Developing teachers' instructional leadership capacity	Brian Noble	M	4	Suburban	1,200	97%	82%	Middle	Low
7	Improving small-group reading instruction by building teacher capacity for data use	Winona Sawyer	F	0	Urban	500	98%	92%	Elem.	Low
8	Fostering a culture of effective data use to support students' personalized learning	Peter Reid	M	4	Suburban	400	14%	22%	Elem.	Medium
9	Supporting students' mastery of English language arts standards through data use and curriculum alignment	Sandra Alford	F	0	Rural	600	25%	53%	Middle	Medium

NOTE: FRPL = free or reduced-price lunch.

^a Most case study principals began the EDP in 2016–2017; numbers and percentages have been rounded to protect confidentiality.

^b Names of individuals are aliases to protect confidentiality.

^c School performance level is based on the state's school grading system.

Data Collection

To gather perceptions of how the principal worked to improve his or her school, we conducted a series of interviews and focus groups over two school years. With the exception of Case 1, we conducted an initial day-long site visit to each school in spring 2017 and returned for another day-long visit in spring 2018. (We visited the Case 1 school in fall 2017 and fall 2018). During the visits, we individually interviewed the principal and key implementers of his or her school improvement effort, which typically included the assistant principal(s) and instructional coaches. We also conducted multiple focus groups with teacher leaders (e.g., department heads) and select other instructional staff (e.g., a grade-level teaching team). When relevant, we also observed classes and collected supporting documentation on the site visits. About four months and eight months after the initial visit, we conducted hour-long follow-up phone interviews with the principal. Around these four time points, we also interviewed each principal's NISL coach. Finally, we interviewed each principal's direct supervisor (for example, the district superintendent) once, typically in spring 2017. See each case for specific details of the data collection pertaining to that case.

Our interview and focus group protocols were semistructured. We asked similar questions across all participants. In addition to questions about the participant background and the school context, the protocol addressed key topics, such as the ALP focus (e.g., what was it and how the principal selected the topic/issue), the ALP goals (e.g., what the vision for school improvement was and how it was communicated), primary strategies for reaching the ALP goals (e.g., why they were selected), key action steps (e.g., what they were and who helped to implement them), progress-monitoring toward the goals (e.g., what processes were in place and what data, if any, were collected), perceived impacts of the ALP (e.g., on school culture, staff, students), and challenges and facilitators of the ALP implementation process. Throughout interviews with the principals and their coaches, we probed on the extent to which the EDP and coaching appeared to have informed or influenced the principal's decisions and actions and which core EDP principles, concepts, and resources the principal drew on. See section 5 of this appendix for initial interview protocols used with the principal and the coach. All other protocols are available upon request.

We note two limitations in our data: (1) Our data are all qualitative in nature and mainly self-reports, and (2) because we spoke with selected individuals, their views may not necessarily represent the views of all staff at the schools.

Data Analysis

The information we present in each of the cases is drawn from our coding and synthesis of transcribed interviews and focus groups, and school documents we collected. We uploaded the interview transcripts into Dedoose to facilitate coding and analysis. One researcher performed

the coding process with the support of three additional researchers, two of whom conducted the site visits and collected the data.

The first step of coding was to organize the qualitative data into major sections of the case study (i.e., district and school context, principal background, step of developing and enacting the ALP, influence of the EDP and NISL coach, and challenges). The next step involved creating subcodes (e.g., representing strategies and steps that principals implemented or common challenges) through an iterative and collaborative process of reviewing the transcripts and conferring about the content. We reviewed the transcripts across and within cases to uncover patterns of responses. In addition, one researcher reviewed all transcript data initially to construct a timeline of major events and activities that occurred within each case. This process also helped to inform the development of the subcodes. Once the set of subcodes was finalized, one researcher reviewed the transcripts and coded all relevant sections of the transcripts. Then, three researchers collaborated to synthesize the data using the excerpts feature of Dedoose. This feature allowed the researchers to filter the coded excerpts by sections and subcodes within each case so they could uncover major themes within each section. In addition to the interview data, we also collected artifacts from the principals in the case studies, including their draft and final ALPs, relevant meeting minutes, and any resources or tools they developed as part of their ALP strategies. These artifacts were reviewed alongside the excerpt analysis to provide supplemental details as needed.

Finally, first drafts of the case studies were initially reviewed by the original data collectors to ensure accuracy of the information presented and chronological organization of activities. Furthermore, the nine principals and their NISL coaches fact-checked a draft of the case studies, and we revised the narratives as necessary.

Additional Findings from the Case Study Analysis

The Executive Development Program diagnostic tools helped confirm, but not identify, the focus of principals' school improvement

On the whole, the suite of EDP diagnostic tools did not help principals determine the focus of their school improvement as much as it helped them confirm it in a coarse-grained way. For example, the tools confirmed for one principal that she should focus on raising standards and establishing clear grade-level expectations, which she had already anticipated doing to strengthen writing instruction. For another principal, the tools suggested that he needed to build effective teams and improve the quality of teaching, which corroborated in a general sense his intent to focus on professional learning communities to develop teachers' formative assessment practices. In sum, some principals essentially settled on the area and means of improvement prior to taking the EDP diagnostics and were likely to have proceeded down the same path without them.

Principals drew on Executive Development Program resources to convey their vision to the staff and to develop them as professionals

All the case study principals applied EDP concepts in implementing their ALP, but, beyond this, several principals explicitly used EDP materials as part of the professional learning content for teachers. Some principals believed that exposing staff firsthand to some of the concepts and ideas that inspired them could help the school cohere around the same vision. To this end, a few principals used memorable materials (e.g., video, anecdote) they acquired in the EDP to launch their school improvement initiative in an all-staff meeting. Moreover, a few principals conducted book studies with staff using a book introduced in the EDP, shared key readings in professional learning communities, and even redelivered parts of some EDP sessions to instructional leadership teams.

Principals reported a range of progress at the end of about two years of Action Learning Project implementation

At the end of about two years of ALP implementation, all principals reported increased communication, collegiality, and willingness and capacity to collaborate among teachers.

Moreover, based primarily on informal observations and walkthroughs, principals reported some observable desired changes in some teachers' practices. For example, teachers were assigning more cognitively engaging work, more consistently checking for students' understanding, making more use of data, and becoming more adept at adjusting instruction to meet individual students' needs. In addition, some principals noticed an attendant shift in some teachers' mind-sets toward believing that all students can learn and all students should be held to high standards.

Some principals reported seeing differences in student attitudes and behaviors in response to changes in instruction. These differences included students appearing to be more engaged in their learning; having more confidence in their abilities as readers, writers, and thinkers; and taking greater ownership of their learning trajectory.

It is too early to assess student achievement gains

Although principals were ultimately working to effect gains in student achievement, this was not a reportable outcome at the end of about two years of implementation. There are at least two reasons for this. First, as reported in the main report, many of the improvement efforts began—arguably necessarily so—with attention to establishing a school culture that was conducive to a collaborative approach to the work, generating buy-in, and establishing and learning structures and routines for professional learning. It was not until late in the second year that principals began addressing in earnest core instructional and assessment practices that directly affected student learning. And, of course, changing such practices took time, so effects on students would likely not be evident for at least another year or so. Second, even if there were student

achievement gains to note, principals were not systematically tracking data on teacher practices (as mentioned in the main report); hence, it would have been difficult to definitively attribute any gains to improvement work–aligned changes in instruction.

4. School Principal Phone Interview Protocol

Length of interview: 30–45 minutes

Consent Script

Thanks for talking with us about your experience with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)'s Executive Development Program (EDP). As you know, I work for RAND, which is a non-profit research organization that received a US Department of Education grant to study the EDP and NISL coaching program. We'd like to hear from you today about your experience and how, if at all, you have applied EDP learnings to your practice.

Before I start, I wanted to let you know that your participation in this interview is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, decline to answer any question, or stop the interview at any time.

All information you provide will be kept confidential. We will not provide anyone outside our research team with a write up of this or any other interview, nor will we identify anyone by name in our reports. RAND will report findings based on the interviews only in aggregate form.

Even though we will only use unattributed, anonymous quotes in our reports or discussions, it is possible someone might recognize your words. So please don't tell us anything that you are worried about other people hearing and that you think is uniquely attributable to you.

I anticipate that the interview will last approximately 30–45 minutes. To thank you for your time, we will be offering you a \$100 Amazon electronic gift card. We will need to collect your email in order to distribute the gift card. This information will not be linked to your interview responses.

Do you agree to participate? Additionally, with your permission, we would like to record this interview. We will destroy them and the audio files after the study is complete.

If you have any questions later, please don't hesitate to contact me, and I can answer your questions or put you in touch with the study's Principal Investigator at RAND. *[Provide the following contact information if necessary: Benjamin Master, 703-413-1100 Ext. 5170 or bmaster@rand.org.]*

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or need to report a research-related injury or concern, you can contact RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee toll-free at (866)-697-5620 or by emailing hspcinfo@rand.org. If possible, when you contact the Committee, please reference Study #2016-0086 (SEED) or #2017-0153 (i3).

Do you agree to participate? _____ YES _____ NO

[If yes to participation:] Is it ok to turn on the tape recorder now? _____ YES _____ NO

Interview Protocol

Background

1. In what school year did you first become principal?
 - a. At this school?
2. Our records show that you started the NISL EDP in **summer 2016** and that you started receiving NISL coaching in **fall 2016/Jan 2017**. Is this correct? *[Yes/No]*
 - a. *[If not correct]* When did you begin the EDP?
 - b. *[If not correct]* When did you begin receiving NISL coaching?
 - c. When did the EDP end?
 - d. When did NISL coaching end for you?
 - i. *[If prior to summer 2018]* What led you to end the NISL coaching at that time?

*Think about your **EDP and NISL coaching** experience.*

3. On a scale of “Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Agree-Strongly Agree,” how would you respond to the following statements? Please explain your rating.
 - a. The EDP improved my ability to conceptualize and lead school improvement. *[Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Agree-Strongly Agree]*
 - b. The Action Learning Project (ALP) I completed as part of the EDP was worthwhile. *[Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Agree-Strongly Agree; also probe on whether principal executed ALP.]*
 - c. I would recommend the EDP to fellow principals. *[Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Agree-Strongly Agree]*
 - d. NISL coaching added value beyond the EDP course alone. *[Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Agree-Strongly Agree]*
4. What 2 or 3 words or phrases would you use to describe your leadership practice or leadership qualities *before* the **EDP and NISL coaching**?
 - a. How did the **EDP and NISL coaching** change your practice or qualities, if at all?
5. What top 3 lessons or ideas have you used the most from **the EDP**, if any? *[Elicit 2–3 clear lessons or ideas]*
 - a. What top 3 lessons or ideas have you used the most from **NISL coaching**, if any? *[Elicit 2–3 clear lessons or ideas]*

*Let's think about the school year in which you were first participating in the EDP and/or NISL coaching. This would be school year **2016–2017**.*

6. What were the main areas of school improvement you were working on? (e.g., new curriculum; turning over staff; boosting science instruction; improving climate)
7. Did the **EDP and NISL coaching** influence your approach to school reforms this year? *[Yes/No]*
 - a. *[If yes]* How? *[Probe for a concrete example of the connection to the **EDP**].*
8. How did **NISL coaching** support your efforts? What coaching activities were most beneficial to you? *[Probe for a concrete example of how **NISL coaching** helped].*

*Now let's think about the next school year, by which time you've completed the EDP. I'm talking about school year **2017–2018**.*

9. Were you still working on the same areas of school improvement (e.g., new curriculum; turning over staff; boosting science instruction)? *[Yes/No]*
 - a. *[If no]* What were the new focal areas? How did these areas build on or connect to the ones in the prior year?
 - b. *[If yes]* How did your school's work on this topic deepen in this year compared to the prior year?
10. Did the **EDP and NISL coaching** influence your approach to school reforms this year? *[Yes/No]*
 - a. *[If yes]* How? *[Probe for a concrete example of the connection to the **EDP**].*
11. How did the **NISL coaching** support your efforts? What coaching activities were most beneficial to you? *[Probe for a concrete example of how **NISL coaching** helped].*

*Now let's think about this school year, **2018–2019**.*

12. Are you still working on the same areas of school improvement? *[Yes/No]*
 - a. *[If no]* What were the new focal areas? How did these areas build on or connect to the ones in the prior year?
 - b. *[If yes]* How did your school's work on this topic deepen in this year compared to the prior year?
13. Does or did the **EDP and NISL coaching** influence your approach to school reforms this year? *[Yes/No]*

- a. *[If yes] How? [Probe for a concrete example of the connection to the **EDP**].*
14. How does or did the **NISL coaching** support your efforts? What coaching activities were most beneficial to you? *[Probe for a concrete example of how **NISL coaching** helped].*

These are my last few questions.

15. What suggestions do you have for improving the **EDP**?
16. What, if anything, would you change about **NISL coaching**?

Thank you so much for your time.

17. May I email you a \$100 Amazon gift code? *[Yes/No]*
18. *[If yes] What email address should I email that gift code to? [Or just verify if we can use the same address we reached them at when scheduling the interview.]*

5. Select Case Study Data Collection Protocols

In this section, we present only two of the main interview protocols we used for the case studies. These are representative of the topics and interview structure we used for all of the case study interviews. All of the interview protocols are available upon request from the first author by emailing ewang@rand.org.

Principal Interview (Initial Site Visit)

Estimated time: 60–90 minutes

Consent Script

My name is _____. I am a researcher with the RAND Corporation, an independent nonprofit research institute. RAND is studying the NISL Executive Development Program (EDP). Thank you for participating in the case study component. The purpose of the case study is to provide deep insight into how the EDP supports principals to implement their vision of school improvement as articulated in their Action Learning Project (ALP).

Data collection activities for the case study consists of:

- A site visit from RAND researchers in spring 2017 and spring 2018. During each of these visits to your school, we will conduct:
 - an interview with you (1–1.5 hours)
 - an interview with your coach (1–1.5 hours)
 - interviews with other school leaders (e.g., your assistant principal, teacher leaders) (1 hour)
 - one or multiple focus group(s) with staff that play a key role in implementing your ALP (1–1.25 hours)
- Three additional follow-up phone interviews between spring 2017 and spring 2018
 - with you (1 hour each)
 - with your coach (1 hour each)
- Collection of artifacts that support or help document instructional change. These may include school improvement plans, memos to staff, among other documents.
- Finally, we may contact you after data collection to check the accuracy of our findings.

Your participation in the case study is voluntary. Your participation will not have consequence for your employment or relationship with NISL or your coach. Your participation in the data collection activities is voluntary. For instance, you can stop an interview at any time or skip any questions. Our study team will keep what you say and the documents that we collect from you confidential. In our notes or reports, we will not identify you by name or attribute any

statements to you without your permission; however, it may be possible for someone to think they can identify you by inference because of certain details or quotes. Note that we do plan to use a transcription service but they will have signed a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement.

As overviewed above, if you agree to participate in the case study, we will be speaking with your coach and select staff in your school. This means that these individuals will be informed about your participation in the study. These individuals will be asked to talk about your efforts to implement the ALP and your school leadership overall. The coach will be asked to discuss the coaching sessions they have had with you and your interactions with them during those coaching sessions. We will keep what they say confidential as well.

All information RAND collects will be used for research and evaluation purposes. There is no direct financial benefit to you for participating, and there is no foreseeable risk, except the possible breach of confidentiality, and we will follow strong data safeguarding procedures to prevent that.

Do you agree to participate in the case study as described? Note that by agreeing you are consenting to all of the data collection activities we listed previously.

During the interviews I may jot some notes. In addition, I would like to audio-record the conversations to check the accuracy of my notes. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. **Do you agree to this?**

Do you have any questions before we begin today's interview? *[Pause for questions and answer.]* If you have any questions later, please don't hesitate to contact me and I can answer your questions or put you in touch with the study's Principal Investigator at RAND. *[Provide the following contact information if necessary: Benjamin Master, 703-413-1100 Ext. 5170 or bmaster@rand.org.]*

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or need to report a research-related injury or concern, you can contact RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee toll-free at (866) 697-5620 or by emailing hspcinfo@rand.org. If possible, when you contact the Committee, please reference Study #2016-0086 (SEED) or #2017-0153 (i3).

[If participant agreed to have interview recorded, start recording. If not, prepare to take detailed notes.]

Personal Background

1. How many years have you been a principal at this school?
 - a. In this district?
 - b. What other positions have you held as an educator and for how long?
 - c. What are your disciplinary/content areas of expertise?

NISL EDP and Coaching

2. **Why** did you pursue the **EDP** with NISL?
 - a. Were you required, by the district or state, to take the NISL EDP?
 - b. When did you start Executive Development Program (EDP)? Did you take all 12 units?
 - c. Aside from the NISL EDP and coaching, what other professional development programs, if any, have you been involved in recently, within the district or otherwise. What is the focus/content of the PD?
 - d. How, if at all, is the NISL EDP approach similar to or different from other professional development programs for principals you have taken or considered taking?
3. What specific **knowledge, concepts, and skills** did you learn through the NISL EDP that contributes to your ability to provide strong instructional leadership?
 - a. Can you give me a few examples of where you've tried to apply EDP concepts this school year?
 - b. How easy or challenging was it to apply the EDP concepts and skills to your practice?
4. Which aspects of the NISL **EDP** could be **improved**?
 - a. What content/topics could have been better covered?
 - b. Did you have too little, enough, or too much time on any topics?
 - c. How helpful were the readings/assignments?
 - d. How effective were the instructional strategies used?
 - e. How engaging was the EDP overall?
 - f. To what extent did it meet your expectations for a professional development program focused on instructional leadership?
5. How is NISL (SEED) **coaching** going?
 - a. How often do you meet with your coach?
 - b. Describe a typical meeting with the coach.
 - c. How is coaching helping you generally in your current position?

- d. What role did the coaching play in guiding the development & implementation of your ALP?
- e. What more do you wish to gain from the coaching?

Instruction and Learning in the School

Come prepared for the interview with a basic sense of the school, district, and state contexts, including demographics and student achievement. Through this and the following sections, check if our understanding is correct and seek clarification if necessary.

6. What would you say are the **major areas of strengths** for this school with respect to instruction and learning?
7. What would you say are the **major areas of improvement** for this school with respect to instruction and learning?
8. Given the improvement areas you mentioned, what would you say is the single **most important strategy** you've identified to improve those weaknesses?
 - a. What school year did that strategy start?
9. What, if any, **major changes** within the past few years might have affected the quality of instruction and learning in the school?
10. What would you say are **your areas of strength** as an instructional leader?
 - a. What would you say are your areas of improvement as an instructional leader?

ALP Development and Implementation

The following section is a generic version of the protocol. Where appropriate, add probes or rephrase questions to reflect the principal's specific ALP topic.

11. What **topic/issue** are you addressing in your ALP?
 - a. Why did you decide to focus on this topic/issue? Please describe and characterize the problem – Is it persistent? Is it aligned with a district priority?
 - b. To what extent is this a new/novel challenge for you, or had you experienced this problem and worked to address it in the past, at this or another school?
 - c. What specific data did you draw on or analyze to understand the problem?
 - d. How, if at all, did the NISL EDP inform your choice of topic for the ALP? Did the course content or conversations help you view or frame data or your school in a certain way?
 - e. When did you start developing your ALP?

- f. How useful is the ALP as a guide for you to do your improvement work?
12. What are the **goals** you are trying reach via the ALP in this school year and in future school years?
- How have you communicated your goals/your vision to your school community (e.g., teachers, staff, students, parents, etc.)?
 - How, if at all, did the NISL EDP inform your vision related to the ALP? Did the course content or conversations help you define your vision of what good instructional leadership entails?
 - Which NISL concepts in particular influenced your ALP? (i.e., 1) “All means all”; 2) NISL Wheel as a framework for systems thinking; 3) NISL’s conceptual framework for strategic thinking; 4) Use of teams for distributed leadership; 5) Use of research on “How People Learn” to drive the development and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 6) Fostering a culture of continuous learning)
13. What primary **strategies** are you using to help you reach your ALP goal?
- How and why did you select these strategies?
 - Who are the major players supporting the implementation of your ALP? How did you select them? What roles and responsibilities have you assigned them or have they taken on?
 - How did you leverage the strengths in your school to enact change/to reach your ALP goal?
14. What **concrete steps** have you taken so far to help you reach your ALP goal (e.g., what tools, processes, protocols have been developed and implemented)? *Prompt principal to show and tell about documents/artifacts, if appropriate.*
- What next steps do you plan to enact next?
 - How, if at all, did the NISL EDP inform the concrete steps you are taking to reach your ALP goal? Did the course content or conversations help you identify which strategies might best help you reach your goal?
 - What’s your planned timeline for implementing your strategies? (Probe for # of school years.)
15. How and how often do you **monitor** and assess your own progress toward your ALP goals/vision?
- How would you know when you have reached your goal?
 - What specific data are you collecting and analyzing? What measures are you using?
 - How and how often, if at all, do you inform the school community of the progress?

- d. How, if at all, did the NISL EDP inform your plan for monitoring and assessing your progress toward your ALP goals?
16. What **impacts**, if any, has the ALP had so far (e.g., impacts on student behavior, student achievement, staff mindset, school culture, etc.)?
- a. What makes you say so? What should I see/hear if I walk down the hall, into classrooms, or observed meetings, etc. that would be evidence of the change and impacts you described?
17. Overall, what has **worked well and not worked well** with developing and implementing your ALP?
- a. Is this ALP an “extra” thing you have to do, or does it actually help you get done the main things you want to do?
 - b. Which aspects of this professional development journey do you think would have happened anyhow, with or without NISL’s EDP and coaching? Explain.
18. What **challenges** did you encounter in implementing your ALP? Please recount specific instances of when you encountered these challenges.
- a. What challenges did you encounter within your school (e.g., staff or student-related challenges)
 - i. How, if at all, did you attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent were you successful in overcoming the challenge?
 - b. How, if at all, did district policies and guidelines hinder the implementation of your ALP?
 - i. How, if at all, did you attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent were you successful in overcoming the challenge?
 - c. How, if at all, did state-level policies or requirements hinder the implementation of your ALP?
 - i. How, if at all, did you attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent were you successful in overcoming the challenge?
19. How much **autonomy** do you have in leading the school according to your vision? *The specifics of this question are conditioned on the details of the ALP.*
- a. Do you have autonomy over hiring and staffing decisions?
 - b. Do you have autonomy over the selection and use of curricula and assessment?
 - c. Do you have autonomy over setting the agenda for staff development?

Conclusion

20. Is there **anything I haven't asked** about related to the NISL EDP and the implementation of your ALP that you would like me to know?

Coach Interview (Initial Interview)

Estimated time: 60–75 minutes

Consent Script

My name is _____. I am a researcher with the RAND Corporation, an independent nonprofit research institute. RAND is studying the NISL Executive Development Program (EDP). One of your coachees has agreed to participate in the case study component of the study. The purpose of the case study is to provide deep insight into how the EDP supports principals to implement their vision of school improvement as articulated in their Action Learning Project (ALP).

As part of our efforts to understand your coachee's implementation of his/her ALP, we are interested in speaking with you. Thank you for participating in the case study. Your coachee has agreed to allow you to share information about his/her efforts to implement the ALP, including your coaching sessions with him/her, and their school leadership overall.

Data collection for the case study will span March 2017 to spring/summer 2018. Your participation in the study data collection will consist of the following activities, to be coordinated with consideration of your schedule:

- An interview during our site visit to the coachee's school in spring 2017 and spring 2018 (60–75 minutes each)
- Three additional follow-up phone interviews between spring 2017 and spring 2018 (1 hour each)
- In addition, we may follow up with you after data collection to fact-check our findings

Your participation in the case study is voluntary. Your participation will not have consequence for your employment or relationship with NISL or your coachee. You can stop your participation at any time. Moreover, you can stop any interview at any time or skip any questions. Our study team will keep what you say and the documents that we collect from you confidential. In our notes or reports, we will not identify you by name or attribute any statements to you without your permission; however, it may be possible for someone to think they can identify you by inference because of certain details or quotes. Note that we do plan to use a transcription service but they will have signed a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement.

All information RAND collects will be used for research and evaluation purposes. There is no direct financial benefit to you for participating, and there is no foreseeable risk, except the possible breach of confidentiality, and we will follow strong data safeguarding procedures to prevent that. **Do you agree to participate in the case study as described?**

During our interview, I may jot some notes. In addition, I would like to audio-record the conversations to check the accuracy of my notes. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. **Do you agree to this?**

Do you have any questions before we begin today's interview? *[Pause for questions and answer.]* If you have any questions later, please don't hesitate to contact me and I can answer your questions or put you in touch with the study's Principal Investigator at RAND. *[Provide the following contact information if necessary: Benjamin Master, 703-413-1100 Ext. 5170 or bmaster@rand.org.]*

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or need to report a research-related injury or concern, you can contact RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee toll-free at (866) 697-5620 or by emailing hspcinfo@rand.org. If possible, when you contact the Committee, please reference Study #2016-0086 (SEED) or #2017-0153 (i3).

[If participant agreed to have interview recorded, start recording. If not, prepare to take detailed notes.]

Background

1. How long have you been a coach to principals/administrators?
 - a. With NISL?
 - b. What are your responsibilities as a NISL coach? How often are you to meet with each coachee?
 - c. What other positions have you held as an educator and for how long?

Coaching Case Study Principal

2. **How long** have you been coaching [Case Study Principal]?
 - a. How did you come to be [Case Study Principal's] coach? Were you assigned? Did you have a prior relationship with [Case Study Principal]?
 - b. How familiar are you / did you become with the school and district context in which [Case Study Principal] works?
3. Please describe your **interactions** with [Case Study Principal].
 - a. How often do you have formal coaching sessions with [Case Study Principal]? To date, how many sessions have you had?
 - b. In addition to formal coaching sessions, how often do you communicate or check in with [Case Study Principal]? How is this done? What is the nature of these check-ins?
 - c. Do you or does [Case Study Principal] usually initiate the communication/reach out?
4. Please describe what a **typical formal coaching sessions** with [Case Study Principal] is like.
 - a. Do you meet in person?
 - b. What kind of preparation occurs before the session?

- c. How long do you meet for?
 - d. Is there a meeting format or protocol that you follow? If so, please describe.
 - e. Who does most of the talking?
 - f. What is the topic or focus of the meetings (e.g., EDP learning, problem-solving)?
 - g. To what extent is the ALP discussed in the session? How, if at all, does the ALP guide the session?
 - h. What, if any, follow-up action or activity is there after a coaching session?
5. To be nominated as a case study participant, principals had to be actively engaged in the coaching and committed to applying their EDP learning to practice (through the implementation of their ALP).
- a. In what ways has [Case Study Principal] demonstrated engagement in the coaching? Please provide concrete, specific examples.
 - b. In what ways has [Case Study Principal] demonstrated commitment to applying the EDP learning to his/her practice?
6. Thinking back to when you first started working with [Case Study Principal], what would you say were his/her **major strengths and areas of improvement**?
- a. How, if at all, do you think [Case Study Principal] has developed since then?
 - b. To what extent do you attribute [Case Study Principal's] development to the NISL EDP and your coaching? Please provide concrete, specific examples.

ALP Development & Implementation

The following section is a generic version of the protocol. Where appropriate, add probes or rephrase questions to reflect the principal's specific ALP topic.

7. What is the **topic/issue** [Case Study Principal] is addressing in his/her ALP?
- a. Given what you know about the school context, to what extent do you think [Case Study Principal] has identified an ALP topic that addresses an important issue/need for the school?
 - b. What has changed since [Case Study Principal] identified the problem, since he/she started enacting the ALP?
8. What is your understanding of the **vision/goals** [Case Study Principal] is trying to reach via the ALP in this school year and in future school years?
- a. Would you say these goals are clear, realistic, and achievable?
9. What primary **strategies** is [Case Study Principal] using to reach the goals set out in the ALP?

- a. Would you say these are promising strategies? Why or why not?
 - b. To what extent do you think [Case Study Principal] leveraged the strengths in his/her school to enact change/to reach his/her ALP goal
 - c. Would you say [Case Study Principal] has tapped the ‘right’ major players and delegated the right roles and responsibilities to them to support the implementation of his/her ALP? Why or why not?
10. What **concrete steps** has [Case Study Principal] taken so far to reach his/her ALP goal (e.g., what tools, processes, protocols have been developed and implemented)?
- a. Would you say these are productive steps toward reaching the ALP goals? Why or why not?
 - b. What next steps does [Case Study Principal] plan to enact next?
11. To what extent do you think the **NISL EDP** informed [Case Study Principal’s] topic, goals/vision, strategies, and the steps he/she has taken to implement his/her ALP?
- a. What evidence do you have for this? Please provide concrete, specific examples.
 - b. What (other) EDP learnings do you think [Case Study Principal] needs to consider and apply to enact real change?
12. To what extent do you think the **coaching** helped [Case Study Principal] to develop and implement his/her ALP?
- a. What evidence do you have for this? Please provide concrete, specific examples.
 - b. How, if at all, has the ALP been referenced or used as part of the coaching?
 - c. What changes to the ALP, if any, have resulted from coaching conversations?
 - d. How and how often do you help monitor and assess [Case Study Principal’s] progress toward his/her ALP goals/vision?
 - e. In what ways could [Case Study Principal] have benefitted more from coaching to help him/her implement his/her ALP?
13. What **impacts** do you perceive so far that could be attributed to the concrete steps and strategies [Case Study Principal] has implemented (e.g., impacts on student behavior, student achievement, staff mindset, school culture, etc.)? What makes you say so?
- a. How long do you think it will take for the ALP to take root and effect real change in the school (e.g., 1 year, 3 years)?
 - b. What challenges do you think might hinder the ALP taking root and getting implemented as intended?

14. What **challenges** did [Case Study Principal] encounter **in implementing his/her ALP**? How do you know? Please recount specific instances of when [Case Study Principal] encountered these challenges.
- a. What challenges were encountered within [Case Study Principal's] school (e.g., staff or student-related challenges)?
 - i. How, if at all, did [Case Study Principal] attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent was [Case Study Principal] successful in overcoming the challenge?
 - b. How, if at all, did district policies and guidelines hinder the implementation of [Case Study Principal's] ALP?
 - i. How, if at all, did [Case Study Principal] attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent was [Case Study Principal] successful in overcoming the challenge?
 - c. How, if at all, did state-level policies or requirements hinder the implementation of [Case Study Principal's] ALP?
 - i. How, if at all, did [Case Study Principal] attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - ii. To what extent was [Case Study Principal] successful in overcoming the challenge?
15. Overall, what has [Case Study Principal] **done well and not quite so well** with respect to developing and implementing his/her ALP?

Reflections on Coaching

16. What **challenges** did you encounter **in coaching** [Case Study Principal]?
- a. When did you encounter these challenges?
 - b. How, if at all, did you and/or [Case Study Principal] attempt to overcome the challenge?
 - c. To what extent were you successful in overcoming the challenge?
17. How can the **NISL coaching** component be improved?

Conclusion

18. Is there **anything I haven't asked** that you would like me to know related to [Case Study Principal] application of learnings from NISL's EDP and the implementation of his/her ALP in practice?