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Introduction

Teachers and leaders in low-performing schools are not lazy. They do not love children less than their counterparts in high-achieving schools. Each day, they arrive at the schoolhouse where they work hard on the work they know to do. But therein lies the fundamental challenge of school improvement: Knowing the right thing to do (Elmore, 2003, 2004; Marzano, 2005). Not only must teachers know what and how to teach; principals must know what effective teaching looks and sounds like and what to do when it is not effective, when learning does not occur.

Leading 2 Learn is based on that hypothesis: Student learning will improve if our school leaders understand what real learning looks and sounds like and work daily to provide teachers the feedback, training, and other resources needed to become more effective in creating learning opportunities for students

In 2004, researchers led by Leithwood and Louis, at the mid-point of a decade of work around the impact of the principalship on student learning, pointed to key attributes of effective school improvement, boiling it down to two simple but challenging leadership activities. First, school leaders must help the organization set a defensible set of directions; second, s/he must influence members of the organization to move in those directions (Leithwood, p. 6). Six years later, in publishing their completed findings, the team refined those statements, noting that effective principals focus on two complimentary norms for success (Louis, 2010; p. 77):

- **Instructional Climate:** Setting the tone or culture in the building that supports continual professional learning
- **Instructional Actions:** Taking explicit and deliberate steps to work professionally and collegially with individual teachers around their own growth and effectiveness

In **Leading 2 Learn**, we will address these two key areas of school leadership at the school level, using two parallel paths targeting two separate groups of leaders: professional learning



and ongoing executive coaching for current principals/assistant principals, and recruitment and preparation of aspiring principal candidates. We briefly outline these here.

Path #1: Principals / Asst. Principals	Path #2: Aspiring Principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning with national experts • School-based Executive Coaching • Cultural assessments of climate with corrective steps for improvement • Team-based data analysis, goal setting • Expansions of PLCs to Data teams • Effective use of the Kentucky Professional Growth & Effectiveness System for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective recruitment of up to 60 high-quality principal candidates • Blended learning in an accredited prep prgm. • Critical performance pieces developed through in-field experiences • Ongoing mentoring and shadowing through a cadre of trained leaders • Licensure and placement of professional principals in rural, high-need schools

A. Quality of the Project Design

Leading 2 Learn is a comprehensive leadership initiative to increase principal effectiveness and develop new principals. Principals and assistant principals will lead their schools to a measurable shift in school culture, teaching and learning, and achievement. Aspiring Principals (Candidates) will become certified through an accredited, experiential prep program.

1. The extent to which goals, objectives, outcomes are clearly specified and measurable

The Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) is a nonprofit LEA serving 37 mostly rural, high-poverty districts in south central Kentucky. In developing programs and services, we look to those who are both most critically in need and most willing to invest in their own improvement. Therefore, Leading 2 Learn will address the leadership needs of schools in our four participating rural districts. Allen County, Barren County, Grayson County, and Todd County school districts (LEAs) each meet eligibility indicators for poverty and teacher certification, as is more thoroughly explained beginning on page 11. Achievement levels fall far below the expectation of Proficiency as established by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) as well as other state/national benchmarks across nearly all content areas. Therefore, our



goals and aligned objectives and benchmarks not only measure improvements in leadership but the impact of leadership on the school, the classroom teacher, and student learning.

Goal 1: To ensure all schools have access to highly effective principals/assistant principals

Goal 2: To ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers

Goal 3: To ensure learning for all students in our high-need schools



Goal 1: To ensure all schools have access to highly effective principals/assistant principals

	Objectives	Measurements	Indicators/Benchmarks
1.1	By 2018, we will increase by 40% the number of highly-qualified principal candidates who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participated in an experiential principal preparation program, received a Professional Principal Certification, and begun to actively seek a principalship in a high-need school. 	Western KY University data related to principal preparation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ number of candidates ✓ number of certifications ✓ number of new principals seeking posts (survey) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting sessions <input type="checkbox"/> Candidate registrations, recommendations in WKU program <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing course completion, grades
1.2	Annually, we will increase the ability of district leaders and members of local principal selection committees to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize the qualities and characteristics of highly-effective school leader, identify qualified and effective school leaders for school vacancies, and place candidates in principal positions who are likely to be highly effective in their high-need school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annual pre/post assessment of Superintendents and local Site Based Decision-Making Council members (developed by evaluators based on principal effectiveness indicators) ✓ Principal placements in our high-need schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor reports <input type="checkbox"/> # of shadowing events <input type="checkbox"/> Cohort size (pre/post) <input type="checkbox"/> Critical performance pieces created (quality, number, type) <input type="checkbox"/> Site-based trainings for selection committees (#, post-training evals)
1.3	By 2018, we will increase by 50% the number of newly certified principals who <u>actively seek</u> principal/asst. principal positions (i.e., not in the program just to achieve rank/pay changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ # of new principals seeking positions (ongoing survey) ✓ Participant employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing superintendent input on program (survey, email)
Aligned to Performance Measure #1: Percentage of graduates certified to become a principal or assistant principal			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site visits with candidates, committees
Aligned to Performance Measure #2: Percentage of graduates certified and hired as a principal/asst. principal in a high-need LEA			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School HR data regarding hiring, placement
Aligned to Performance Measure #3: Percentage of graduates certified through the program who are hired as a principal/asst. principal in a high-need LEA and who remain in that position for at least 2 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> # of candidates responding to posts



Goal 2: To ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers

	Objectives	Measurements	Indicators/Benchmarks
2.1	<p>By 2018, increase by at least 40% the number of effective and highly-effective school principals and assistant principals in our participating schools who know what <u>effective classroom instruction looks like</u> and are <u>capable of supporting teachers</u> in their professional growth. Increases will be seen through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre/post assessment by the Kentucky Professional Growth and Effectiveness System for Principals (PPGES) • the KY TELL Survey of teaching conditions, school leadership • overall student achievement indicators of annual growth (1 year = effective; 1.5 years = highly effective) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kentucky PPGES; annual pre/post measure approved by the USDE (KY-RTTT) ✓ Kentucky TELL Survey (biennial measure) ✓ K-PREP state assessments for student achievement and growth indicators (annual) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing Culture Profile activities <input type="checkbox"/> State assessments, released fall, spring <input type="checkbox"/> Interim school-level assessments (e.g., MAP) <input type="checkbox"/> # of positive indicators (e.g., increased trust, organizational learning)
2.2	<p>Each year, see measurable improvements in each individual school’s instructional climate as measured and monitored annually by the Culture Profile developed in Year 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School Culture Assessment (teacher surveys; teacher, parent and staff interviews; observations of interactions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> # of Peer and Principal observations (TPGES) <input type="checkbox"/> # of PD hours based on TPGES findings for each teacher
2.3	<p>By 2018, increase by at least 25% the number of Accomplished and Exemplary <u>teachers</u> in participating schools as measured by the TPGES. Based on the Danielson <i>Framework for Teaching</i> (2007-2013), TPGES measures multiple domains including planning, environment, instruction, professional responsibilities, and student growth. Principals work collegially with teachers to identify weaknesses and secure specific resources to guide improvements. The measure includes four performance levels: Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, and Exemplary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kentucky TPGES; annual pre/post measure approved by the USDE (KY-RTTT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – annual pre/post for new teachers (< 3 years exp.) – every 3 years for tenured teachers, beginning in 2014-15 school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> # of teachers increasing TPGES levels annually by individual domain <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups and interviews (evaluator) <input type="checkbox"/> # completing the TELL Survey annually <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher retention
<p>Aligned to Performance Measure #4: Percentage completing the PD and whose schools demonstrate positive change, no change, or negative change based on pre/post measures, including student growth</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site visits (evaluator)
<p>Aligned to Performance Measure #5: Percentage of graduates who are rated “effective” or “highly effective” (measured by a USDE approved principal evaluation system)</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing superintendent input on program



Goal 3: To ensure learning for all students in our high-need schools

	Objectives	Measurements	Indicators/Benchmarks
3.1	<p>Annually, beginning in 2015, we will see an increase in overall student achievement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 15% increase in the number of students performing at Proficiency or above in math and reading by grade level • consistent individual student growth as measured by interim assessments and the K-PREP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proficiency indicators via K-PREP for math, reading in grades 3-8, 10, 11 (state assessment) ✓ Student growth indicators by teacher in participating schools, tied to TPGES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing attendance and discipline referral data <input type="checkbox"/> Interim school-level assessments (e.g., MAP) <input type="checkbox"/> Data Team monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom observations (TPGES; other)
3.2	<p>Annually, beginning in 2015, see an increase in overall student college/career readiness in participating middle (on track) and high schools (meeting standards), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 10% increase in the number of students meeting benchmark on the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT (grades 8, 10, 11) • a 20% increase annually in the number of high school graduates meeting Kentucky CCR standards (currently < 40%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EPAS system for all students in grades 8, 9, 11 ✓ Multiple indicators, such as WorkKeys, ASVAB, KOSSA, KYOTE, approved industry certifications (e.g., Microsoft, CAD, Nurse's Aide, Auto, Construction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Retention rates <input type="checkbox"/> Course-taking patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher surveys related to instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Minutes, notes from Data Teams regarding student engagement
3.3	<p>Annually, beginning in 2015, see overall improvements in individual school indicators of learning, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attendance, discipline referrals, graduation rates • Student Voice Survey from the TPGES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School-level data ✓ TPGES by classroom; questions relate to teacher care, clarity, appropriately challenging work, time to persevere, engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site visits (evaluator; project staff) <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing superintendent input on program
	<p>Select Program Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 principal candidates certified through new experiential preparation program • 20 principals/assistant principals trained in how to support effective teaching and learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800 teachers provided additional support by effective school leadership • Up to 14,000 students exposed to improved school cultures, improved school leadership, improved teaching and learning



2. The design is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the population

Leading 2 Learn will target schools in 4 rural school districts – districts where nearly 30 percent of children live in households of poverty (chart, below). Each district has in common a number of identifiable barriers that the research says negatively impact student learning.

Barrier #1: Limited focus by leadership on the practice of teaching – as opposed to the management of teachers and students

Barrier #2: The lack of a focused culture of learning for students and adults in the school building and in the community

Barrier #3: Deep, persistent poverty, including both generational and rural poverty

Barrier #4: A limited pool of principal candidates with instructionally-based experiences to support teachers and students

Barrier #1: The Practice of Teaching. Dr. Phillip Schlechty, in his critical look at the work occurring in classrooms, was among the first to recognize the teacher as the designer of learning opportunities to engage students (2002). No matter what teachers do, they cannot cause learning, he said. “Rather, they design activities for students that they believe students will find engaging and from which students will learn. When teachers design the work right and when they provide the right work (work that contains the right content), students do learn.” (p. 83) The role of teacher improvement – of helping teachers perfect their practice – falls to the principal. After student safety, his/her primary goal must be the development of effective teachers, that is, the effective designers of learning opportunities for students (Schlechty, 2011).

Therefore, to improve the practice of teaching itself, the principal must first understand what good teaching looks and sounds like and be able to work with individual teachers – collegially, through professional conversations – to identify specific areas in need of improvement. This is



the premise of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* (2013, rev.). Created as a foundation for professional conversation among practitioners, the Framework has become the basis of the Kentucky **Professional Growth & Effectiveness System**, a U.S. Department of Education approved system for supporting teacher improvement. Created through state Race to the Top funding, PGES will be piloted in 2013-14 with full implementation in all schools in 2014-15.

The Framework, endorsed by researchers and educational organizations across the country, is divided into 22 components and 76 smaller elements that clearly define observable, demonstrable practices of teachers along a continuum of performance levels (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary¹). However, the Framework is not a checklist; rather, it guides teachers and principals as they consider the teaching and learning that is occurring, not the teacher him/herself. Following the teaching and observation, the teacher and principal engage in a professional discussion using the Framework's criteria to determine the performance levels on each of the applicable aspects. The principal and teacher will then work together to find specific resources and supports to help the teacher improve his/her practice. Danielson notes that teachers may be Exemplary in very few areas, which is a difficult level to reach and maintain in all lessons; more likely, the majority of indicators for an effective teacher should fall within the Accomplished (the state standard to be met by all teachers) or Developing levels. As noted:

A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be "fixed," but rather because teaching is so hard that we can always improve it. No matter how good a lesson is, we can always make it better. Just as in other professions, every teacher has the responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice.

Danielson, 2011

¹ Kentucky has renamed the four levels originally noted by Danielson as Unsatisfactory, Gaining Proficiency, Proficiency, and Exceeding Proficiency.

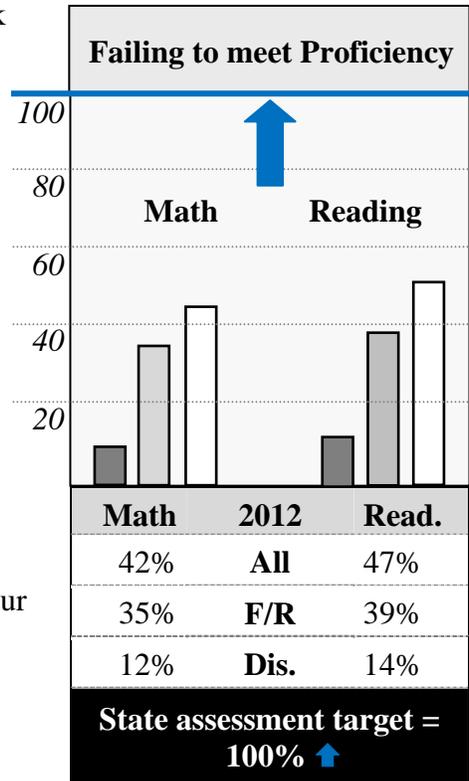
Leading 2 Learn will provide coaching and support to help principals and assistant principals implement the Framework in classrooms throughout the school building to help each and every teacher improve his/her practice (p. 15+). In addition, with partner Western Kentucky University, we will embed the Framework in field-based, online, and face-to-face course requirements of our aspiring principal candidates.

Barrier #2: The lack of a culture of learning for students and adults. Principal-led teacher evaluations have not been focused on learning for teachers but on compliance; principals are supposed to evaluate teachers each year and teachers have learned to dread the “gotcha” factor of these check-list visits. But just as the research says student feedback should be constructive and clear, teacher feedback should also include specific evidence of effectiveness. PGES will help teachers and principals review and compare evidence from observed lessons, pinpoint defined areas for improvement, and work together to improve classroom learning.

The Kentucky TELL Survey (KDE, 2013), which is a confidential online assessment of teaching conditions in all Kentucky schools, indicates this professional, collegial work around teacher practice is not currently occurring consistently in all schools. A significant number of teachers from our four districts (> 20 percent) feel uncomfortable raising issues and concerns with school leadership; the same number disagreed with the statement, “There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.” And, more than 30 percent said professional development follow-up was not provided nor was the learning differentiated based on teacher needs. In fact, in nearly all areas addressing professional growth for teachers, the rate of teacher-stated need and school-provided resources were disparate; for example, an average of 64 percent of teachers in these 4 districts said they needed professional learning in their work to close achievement gaps but only 38 percent received any support in that area. It is unclear whether that

disconnect is due to a lack of attention from leadership, a lack of understanding by teachers, or some other reason. Perhaps that is the point. It is unclear whether school leaders and classroom teachers are basing decisions on data. It also appears the collegial conversations around identified needs and improved practice are not occurring.

The level of student achievement – a measure of the learning occurring in our schools – further demonstrates the lack of focus on the practice of teaching. **Less than half** of our students reached Proficiency in math or reading (chart), an expectation for all students through the state assessment (KY



Performance Rating for Educational Progress, K-PREP). Students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch and students with disabilities fall even further from that 100-percent target.

Students also fall short on the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT tests given to all Kentucky students in the 8th, 10th, and 11th grades, respectively – a battery of tests which serve as predictors of postsecondary success (chart, below). Our students do not meet national benchmarks.

% at benchmark	EXPLORE		PLAN		ACT	
	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading
2012-13						
Allen County	31.5%	39.6%	25.0%	40.4%	22.2%	35.5%
Barren County	45.0%	45.7%	32.4%	44.1%	29.1%	35.9%
Grayson County	28.7%	36.7%	28.9%	42.9%	22.2%	37.3%
Todd County	32.9%	41.4%	24.6%	42.0%	25.2%	42.3%

Percentage at benchmark. The ACT Benchmark is the minimum score needed on the test to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in a first-year college course. Similarly, the PLAN is a predictor of student success on the ACT; the EXPLORE is a predictor of PLAN. Scores in Language Arts are similar; however, in Science, only half as many students meet benchmark as in Math or Reading.



But perhaps that is not surprising. Our students have few people around them, with the exception of their teachers and principals, who have achieved a four-year college degree (U.S. Census). Engineers, CPAs, aeronautics specialists, graphic artists, and game designers are few and far between; in each community, the school district is the largest single employer. Just **11 percent** of adults have received a 4-year degree. Whether we blame a lack of role models, generational poverty (below), or poor academic preparation, something is missing. If the schoolhouse is the center of learning and if degreed adults return to the schoolhouse to teach and lead, it is only logical that the answers lie there – in the schoolhouse.

College	Our Schools	U.S.	KY
No college	66%	42%	53%
Some college	23%	29%	27%
4-year degree	11%	28%	21%

U.S. Census, 5-year average

Barrier #3: Deep, persistent poverty, including both generational and rural poverty. Our teachers work in buildings where high-quality leadership is needed most. Each school is located in a persistently poor, rural area (O’Hara, 2009); nearly a third of the students in project schools live in homes below the federal poverty line (chart, below). Students in these chronically low-performing, low-income, rural schools are a key underserved population (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson, 2009). The negative impacts are clear and deep-seated:

- Less qualified teachers are generally found in high-poverty rural districts (Kollie, 2007). These teachers often bring fewer skills and less content knowledge to the classroom, both of which are needed to create lessons that engage students. Nearly a third of all students in our schools (29%) live in homes below the federal poverty line. As seen in the Appendix, 1.29 to 4.80% of our teachers are teaching through a probationary or emergency certification. Academic indicators (above) demonstrate the divide between the teaching and the learning.
- As noted, the district is the largest employer in each county; the majority of the advanced college degrees are found inside our rural schools, limiting role models for students



seeking non-teaching careers. Historically, teachers in these schools are natives of the counties in which they teach. That is, they have attended these same rural, high-poverty schools only to return there to teach themselves.

Districts	Total # of Schools			# of Prin./Asst.	Rural Population	% Poverty ¹	% F/R Lunch
	Elem.	Middle	High				
Allen County	2	1	1	7	19,980	26.4%	59%
Barren County	7	1	1	13	26,745	22.3%	58%
Grayson County	4	1	1	11	25,785	28.2%	64%
Todd County	2	1	1	7	12,447	32.6%	61%
	15	4	4	38	All high-poverty, rural districts		

¹Each of our districts is a district of high poverty as determined by the US Census Small Area Income and Population Estimate (2013). And each is a rural district (NCES/RLISP).

Payne and Jenson, in their separate work to define and address the needs of young learners, define our entrenched poverty: Communities of less than 50,000 people in which at least two generations have been born into poverty (Jensen, 2009; Payne, 2005). While we acknowledge the debate among scholars as to whether such entrenchment is permanent, it is clear the families from our four counties are “not equipped with the tools to move out of their situations.” (Jenson, 2009) Nor are these families prone to understand or seek out educational opportunities available to their children. Even if they do, schools in their communities likely are not of the same quality (Jenson, 2009). The Carsey Institute further notes the increased frequency of young children in poverty (under the age of 6) in rural, regardless of race; and the impact of teen parenting (Mattingly, 2010; O’Hare, 2009). In these four counties, the teen pregnancy rate is 55 for every 1,000 live births, nearly twice the national rate (32 per 1,000 live births; U.S. Census.

In summary, poverty impacts all areas – health, education and the fundamentals of daily life. For example, students from poverty often disengage (Cataldi, 2009; Smink, 2004); the determination and goal-setting common to the middle class are not skills learned in a home of



generational poverty (Jenson, 2009). In addition, teachers and others within the schoolhouse may not fully understand the needs of these families. As Jenson notes (2009):

When (school) staff members work with children raised in poverty, a common observation is “Bless their hearts, they come from such terrible circumstances.” The problem with that sentiment is that it leads to lowered expectations. (p. 12; emphasis added)

Leaders must work with teachers to understand the types of learning opportunities these students need then help teachers identify and use specific tools and methods that will be effective.

Barrier #4: A limited pool of principal candidates. Within the next five years, our four districts will likely need to replace nearly half of the current 38 principals and assistant principals, based on current years of service and potential retirement dates. That does not include the number of principals who may leave their post for other jobs in the central office or in another district. But putting a body in the principal’s seat is not the whole of the problem. We must impact the pool of high-quality applicants from which high-quality candidates may be deliberately screened, selected and trained (Cook, 2004; Fry, 2004).

- Half of the teachers certified as principals in our districts will never seek a principal position.
- Principal candidates in our region gravitate to more affluent schools in larger population centers; 25 or more applicants in Warren County – population 77,000 – apply for vacancies than in our rural schools, where likely 5-10 candidates are available.
- In our 4 districts, more candidates apply for elementary school vacancies than for middle or high school positions – at a rate of more than 2-to-1. In 6 of our 8 middle and high schools, **fewer than 5 candidates** applied for the most recent principal/assistant principal vacancies.
- Our districts report an uptick in the number of educators now using online certification programs; while these may be accredited programs, they do not provide the much-needed experience, practice, or coaching support supported by the research.



- Schools with low-income and/or low-achieving students tend to have less-experienced principals who typically attended less selective preparation programs; and, successful leaders tend to transfer to more affluent, higher-achieving schools (Loeb, 2010).
- Site Based Decision Making Councils, the locally-elected group of parents and educators who make principal selection decisions, have no training in how to select a potentially effective principal. Resumes do not fully support this process; rather, selection teams must be well versed in the key characteristics evident in successful school leaders (Clark, 2009).
- Our current candidate pool is comprised only of self-selected individuals willing to brave the educational/administrative burdens (Levin, 2005; Fry, 2004; Young, 2003)

Also impacting our pool is the un-doable nature of the job. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Association of Secondary Principals cite a decade of reports to this effect. Fewer teachers seek principalships, citing stress and workloads. Pay increases slightly; but the number of days worked increases at a greater rate. Certification and rank changes acclaim and monetary success minus the headaches (NAESP, 2003; Norton, 2002)

Leading 2 Learn will build a pool of instructional leaders through a highly-selective, experiential principal preparation program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) to ensure communities have highly-effective principals from which to choose. The research is clear: Improved leadership skills directly correlate to improved student achievement (Leithwood, 2004; Waters, 2003). Therefore, we must increase the pool of high-quality applicants from which high-quality candidates may be deliberately screened, selected, trained (Cook, 2004; Fry, 2004).

3. The project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

Leading 2 Learn will create effective and highly effective school leaders using a two-tiered approach to impact principals/assistant principals and aspiring principals. This is not just because the School Leadership Program allows such an approach; in our rural communities – where educators are typically natives of their local communities – we simply must address the entire cycle of principal development. This is presented through our Program Design (pp. 15-29) and integrated within our comprehensive work in educational improvement (pp. 29-31), noted here.



Project description

- Instructional Climate, Instructional Actions (Principals/Asst. Prin.) p. 16
- Experiential Learning for Aspiring Principals (Certification) p. 22
- Comprehensive efforts to improve teaching and learning**
- Professional learning around content, pedagogy (1968+) p. 29
- Kentucky Common Core Content State Standards (2010+) p. 29
- Superintendents Network (2010+) p. 30
- Instructional School Leadership Network (2011+) p. 30
- GRREC Leadership Division (2011+) p. 30
- Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (2012+) p. 31

Principals and Assistant Principals. Our work in school leadership may best be illustrated through a simple if / then statement formulated from our initial hypothesis, found on page 1:

- If we ▶ Enable and expect school leaders to recognize and understand what real learning looks and sounds like,
- and if we ▶ Provide those leaders specific, targeted professional learning, authentic leadership experiences, and ongoing mentoring/executive coaching to shift their knowledge and understanding,
- then we will see ▶ An increase in the effectiveness of both teachers and leaders (Goal 1, 2),
- which will result in ▶ A measurable and significant increase in overall student learning in participating schools (Goal 3).

In designing our program for principals and assistant principals in our high-poverty, low-performing rural schools, we have centered our efforts around Instructional Climate and Instructional Actions, the two complimentary norms for success Louis and Leithwood have found to be the focus of effective school leaders (2010).

- **Instructional Climate.** Culture trumps everything. Or, as Dr. Peter Drucker (1909-2005) is credited with saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Taking that into the schoolhouse, we believe as the Center for Improving School Culture professes: the culture of the school is the determining factor in the achievement and well-being of the entire learning community, permeating every facet of the school building (Wagner, 2008). Schools succeed in a positive, collaborative culture; creating that culture is a key responsibility of the building principal (Peterson, 2002, 2009; Schein, 1985, 2004).

To gauge the culture of each school, we will perform a School Culture Assessment in each schoolhouse. Through a five-day observation and interview process, we will uncover and collect data about each school’s learning environment; the data will be analyzed to determine patterns in thinking and behavior. The process uncovers how staff members feel about each other, their students and their abilities to learn, and their own effect on student learning. Teachers, leaders, bus drivers, students, custodians, parents – all stakeholders are included through observations and small group interviews. Results are shared through a School Culture Profile, which includes specific, immediate, and long-term areas and actions for improvement. The principal then works through his/her leadership team to plan specific steps to address identified issues and continue to nurture the positive aspects of the culture.

The School Culture Profile becomes a road map for each principal, who can monitor improvements over days, weeks and months as well as from school year to school year. Our staff members are trained in the assessment process and will be able to conduct each



multi-day session effectively over the first four months of the project (Oct. 2013-Feb. 2014).

The Profile will also help project staff monitor ongoing changes in participating schools through the implementation of Instructional Actions (below), becoming a guide in the design of specific levels of professional learning services for each school. We anticipate, from our historic work around school culture and our initial needs analysis of achievement data in these four school districts that we will ultimately focus on the principals and assistant principals in our middle and high schools. This will include 20-25 principals and assistant principals as well as their school-level leadership teams², as outlined more thoroughly on page 18. We have budgeted accordingly.

- **Instructional Actions.** Armed with the result of the School Culture Assessment, we will take the explicit and deliberate steps noted by Louis and Leithwood (2010) to help principals and assistant principals work professionally and collegially with individual teachers on teachers' own growth and effectiveness in the classroom. This is the fundamental challenge of school leadership: Knowing the right thing to do (Elmore, 2003, 2004; Marzano, 2005).

In **Leading 2 Learn** an Executive Coach will work alongside each school principal and assistant principal as he or she leads the work of teaching and learning. While executive coaching at the school level is a relatively new concept in the literature, it has been recognized in business and industry for decades. Coaching provides leaders discrete, pragmatic, and knowledgeable feedback on specific tasks, such as communication with teachers; help in understanding the look and feel of good classroom instruction; guidance in how to give effective feedback; and when to empower teachers (gradual release of new strategies). Coaching as a leadership improvement tool translates into action by the leader, which leads to impacts that are quantifiable (McGovern, 2001); it increases the

² Principal candidates will also participate on School Leadership Teams (p. 26) to further embed field-based work.

effectiveness of the leader by facilitating and deepening his/her professional learning as an instructional leader (Edwards, 2002). Executive Coaching also provides the ongoing follow-up lacking in most commercial training formats (Gorham, 2008). Gorham notes three clear benefits to a peer-to-peer support model for principals, including a non-evaluative method for learning on the job; the transfer of daily peer-to-peer learning; and the assurance that clear goals for improvement have been identified and are being met (2008, p. 2).

Each principal/assistant principal will learn to lead school change. S/He will measure and then improve the instructional capacity of teaching and learning in the school through the following integrated components, each of which individually has proved to be effective in the GRREC region. The multi-step process is detailed here and in our Logic Model (p. 37).

- **Data Analysis Cycle (March 2014+)**. We will utilize a sequential Data Retreat^{®3} process to help individual schools determine areas of academic improvement and develop a collaborative, data-driven planning process. The three-day summer retreat begins with guided, in-depth prep work in the spring with each principal/assistant principal and the thoughtful selection of a 10-member, school-based Leadership Team. The process will help each school recognize the “right” work to be addressed within the next school year (Fullan, 2001; Mean, 2011; Reeves, 2011; Schlechty, 2002). On Day 1, school teams learn to create meaning from their data through a constructivist process; the five-step team protocol includes organization of data into tables, development of a graphic representation of that data, group observations or statements of fact (not opinion), explanations or hypotheses related to the patterns seen in the data, and initial connections to their own classrooms. By the end of Day 2, teams begin to experience the “light bulb” effect; they begin to see and accept their individual responsibility for student learning and the areas of

³ The Data Retreat process was developed by CESA 7, an ESA of Wisconsin.

control upon which they can and should have great effect. Teams who arrive at retreats blaming parents, poverty, budget cuts and even kids for the school's failings leave on Day 3 with a specific priority or concern tied to an actionable improvement plan. As school begins in the fall, they also begin to work in their local Data Teams (p. 20) to put into practice and monitor specific professional learning strategies and supports within that plan.

True, data analysis is nothing new. But, Data Retreats provide critical elements that include the facilitation of a school team's work by trained facilitators (GRREC staff); space and time away from the schoolhouse in which to think and to challenge others' thinking; protocols to focus/re-focus team members on instructional practices they can control (as opposed to blaming kids, parents, budgets, etc.); and year-round follow-up and monitoring of improvements by the team with support of retreat facilitators.

- **Instructional Rounds (Fall 2014+).** Based on the work of Dr. Richard Elmore and his Harvard-based team (City, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009), Instructional Rounds will help each school monitor a focused problem of practice identified through the Data Retreat (above) and begin to refine the practice of teaching. The process is patterned after the common approach in hospitals, especially teaching hospitals, of medical rounds. Trained peer observers from neighboring districts are briefed by the host school's superintendent and principal on a data-based problem of practice, a problem for which the school has "reached the limit of their understanding." Over the course of a half day, they observe the learning as evidenced by the student tasks and discussions taking place (not the teacher) in classrooms. The structured conversation of participants utilizes an affinity protocol which involves description, analysis, prediction, and recommendation. Rounds emphasize learning to see, unlearning to judge, and focus on improving the practice of teaching and learning across an entire building. This represents a significant shift from behaviorally-

focused walk-through instruments to an honest, school-wide observation of the instructional core. Rounds also help schools move from the hypotheses generated by the school teams during the Data Retreat to objective recommendations for specific, manageable, and achievable improvements.

A dozen GRREC staff members are adept in this model and will support principals as they first observe the protocols in their schools as hosts in fall 2014, then embed the process in 2015. While GRREC provides regional trainings in the process and has for more than four years, principals trained at Harvard through its four-day institutes have a greater fidelity with the process. Therefore, these principals and assistant principals will attend the Cambridge-based sessions in the summer of 2015, as they themselves begin to roll out the process with their Leadership Teams and school faculties. By the end of Year 3, each school principal/assistant principal (with Executive Coaching support) will embed the process in his/her school.

- **Building Level Data Teams (Fall 2014+).** We will strengthen existing Professional Learning Community structures as we convert them to Building Level Data Teams. These will become the “how” of improving schools and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Dufour, 2008, 2010; Peterson, 2009). Principals/Assistant principals will learn to focus teacher teams on student work, common formative assessments, and the development of instructional strategies and methods.

To help principals create this shift, we will provide training based on the work of Dr. Douglas Reeves and other experts from the Leadership & Learning Center. We will develop a multi-year training plan that will include seminars around the types of leadership available to leaders (instructional, reflective, coaching, etc.), online learning with and site visits by national experts, and development of a personal implementation



plan for each principal/assistant principal's own professional growth. That individual learning plan will be monitored by project staff and reviewed at least quarterly throughout the project. In addition, principals will work with experts to implement the "visible learning" supported in the meta-analysis of Hattie (2010), to ensure adults in the building know what works with kids. Principals will learn to guide Data Teams in the use of quantitative data (e.g., quarterly benchmark testing), ongoing formative assessments (e.g., almost daily classroom learning checks), common formative assessments, and qualitative data (e.g., feedback from students) to improve practices. Teams will meet weekly (grade level) and monthly (vertical), reducing teacher isolation (Elmore, 2004).

Data Teams are collegial – much like the more familiar PLCs – but include rich data analysis with specific protocols to keep teachers focused on improvements in practice based on content standards and individual student needs. This allows adjustments of teaching on a day-to-day or, better yet, hour-to-hour basis. Training for teacher teams will also be provide through GRREC staff as needed (non-project), particularly to help teachers develop and use common formative assessments that provide effective student feedback critical to learning (Ainsworth, 2006; Dufour, 2010; Hattie, 2009).

- **Professional Growth and Effectiveness System.** As noted, Kentucky is currently piloting a Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) developed with the support and ongoing approval of the U.S. Department of Education. The system includes both a teacher and principal system (TPGES; PPGES). In August 2013, at least school in each Kentucky school district will begin to implement the system with all schools participating by 2014-15. A description of the system's power to impact teacher practice through improved teacher-principal collaboration begins on pages 7-8.

But, to be clear, this is not happy news for teachers or their leaders. The roll-out of



PGES has many fearing for their jobs, equating this new growth system with evaluation activities of old. Principal training modules are available from KDE to help leaders prepare for the transition. However, in our ongoing work with more than 250 schools, the system and its supports are seen as just “one more thing” principals must now do.

GRREC already is developing one-on-one supports for principals and assistant principals as they prepare for the new system. That includes the addition of three fulltime staff members to our existing Leadership Division. They will prepare school principals and assistant principal in regional trainings and face-to-face sessions and develop tools for them to use in support of their teachers. We pattern these efforts after our instructional networks, designed and used the past three years for the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Mathematics (p. 29).

The PGES support system is built into **Leading 2 Learn**, and our PGES staff (Abell, Cassidy, Hurley) will be included as part of the project’s Advisory Council (p. 48+) to help support overall project implementation. Resumes for each are included in Appendix.

Experiential Learning for Aspiring Principals. Longitudinal research on a school’s transition from an experienced principal to a new, first-time principal indicates a loss of performance school-wide; simply put, schools perform better with experienced principals (Clark, 2009; p. 30). What is not clear, however, is whether the experiences must be earned on the job. For example, the study finds that assistant principals who move into a principalship in the same school typically avoid the initial new-principal performance slump. But what if we could combine traditional university preparation with authentic leadership experiences in an aspiring principal’s school? That has yet to be fully determined; the research does not thoroughly address the levels of field experiences needed to mitigate for the loss of an experienced principal.

The teacher and principal preparation programs at Western Kentucky University prepare



more teachers and leaders than any other preparatory programs in the Commonwealth, utilizing faculty from the College of Education & Behavioral Sciences and its Department of Educational Administration, Leadership & Research. GRREC has partnered with faculty and staff from WKU around the issues of teacher and leader certification and professional learning for more than 40 years. In fact, until the completion of our training facilities in 2010, our offices were housed on WKU's 200-acre campus – within close proximity of dozens of faculty members who continue to work and collaborate with us to improve the practice of teaching. The Dean of the College of Education serves as a member of our Board of Directors, alongside the 37 superintendents of our member school districts. Together, GRREC and WKU each year work with thousands of in-service teachers and leaders. We have developed need-based programs that remain in place, including alternative certification programs for teacher development in multiple areas.

Through **Leading 2 Learn**, we will work together to fully implement the new program with aspiring principal candidates from our participating schools. We will recruit, identify, select and support candidates through 30 hours of blended learning (traditional, online, experience-based graduate coursework). Selected candidates will – through university discounts and project funding – qualify for a **drastic reduction** in program fees equating to an anticipated tuition rate of \$125/course hour, compared to \$467/hour set for 2013-14. More importantly, candidates will be carefully supported through each phase of the program, as outlined below.

- **Single out high performers.** Traditional principal programs are filled by self-selection. Not so here. Our candidates, first recommended by their principals and meeting graduate requirements, will be screened by an assessment developed by our Advisory Council (p. 48). Through regular, district-based recruitment fairs and information sessions (4/year) and ongoing contact between project staff, district-level mentors and WKU faculty, we will begin to maintain a recruitment database of potential principal candidates. Ongoing meetings



and deliberate visits, emails, and phone conversations with school districts will help us identify high-performing teachers who have an established history of:

- ✓ Demonstrated interest in and experience with professional development, student achievement data, and technology to improve teaching skills;
- ✓ Work experiences with others to improve school and classroom practices; and,
- ✓ Possession of interpersonal skills, leadership ability, and communication skills.

The recommending principal will submit a confidential, multi-dimensional recommendation assessing the candidate's readiness, aptitude and desire for pursuing a career in school leadership. The packet includes examination of prior degree performance, a portfolio of school-based leadership activities, and candidate motive (i.e., resolve to serve as a principal).

Candidates move from an interview by WKU faculty, project staff and regional administrative leaders (K-12) to a scenario-based writing prompt. Finally, the Principal Insight by Gallup will be administered; the structured paper/electronic interview appraises the skills/talents of potential leaders.

- **Selection.** Once a candidate is recommended, s/he must meet the university's traditional requirements for graduate admissions. Candidates then are evaluated on six criteria related to his/her skill and understanding of improving student achievement; leadership; advanced knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; proficiency in written and oral communication; individual academic proficiency; and problem-solving ability. These six criteria are embedded throughout the selection process – from the required application materials to the four phases of candidate screening and across the different role groups involved in the decision process. Rubrics for each component of the selection cycle are already in place and include quantitative scores to guide selection.

In addition, through this project, we will provide specific trainings to the Site Based



Decision Making Council members in our participating schools related to the characteristics of highly effective principals and effective principal programs. SBDM Councils are the elected governing bodies of local schools in Kentucky and are responsible for selecting principals; however, this volunteer group often has limited or no experience in education. Our project staff will develop and embed ongoing training for council members to help them choose candidates with the appropriate skills, characteristics, and training for the position.

- **Cohort Model.** The program is a cohort-based model in which the same group of candidates remains together as a distinct community of learners. Candidates proceed through the program in a pre-planned sequence and time requirement; they cannot self-select into a required course in the program outside the sequence of courses. In all, we will move three cohorts through the two-year program.
- **Coursework.** Blended delivery occurs throughout the program during the field activities, anchor assessments, and other course supports. A Candidate Mentor (below) will work with the candidate, providing support for selection and completion of performance tasks. Project and other GRREC staff members will also serve as Adjunct Faculty to support content delivery around specific areas (e.g., PGES). Candidates will complete 30 hours to receive the Professional Principal Certificate and satisfy Rank I requirements (Kentucky standard).

Courses are based in the Kentucky Professional Standards for Principals (ISSLC), the Dimensions and Functions for School Leaders as identified in the Kentucky Cohesive Leadership System Continuum for Principal Preparation & Development, and the Kentucky Technology Standards for School Administrators. Courses include a strong emphasis on instructional leadership for school improvement; in addition, at the beginning of each course, candidates will be required to review and analyze their school's and district's improvement

plan and submit to each course instructor the school/district needs that relate to the course.

The instructor will adjust instruction to address school and district needs. Assessment outlines of course objectives are included in the Appendix and provide a quick review of the intended outcomes of each course. The table below lists each of the courses in the order to be taken. Each semester, candidates will complete 6 credit hours of coursework through:

- ✓ Face-to-face learning on four Saturdays each semester
- ✓ 30 hours of field experience around the issues addressed through the coursework
- ✓ Completion of at least one critical performance piece related to ongoing field experiences

In addition, as part of this leadership project, candidates will blend the experiences of the ongoing Instructional Climate and Instructional Actions work of his/her home school and/or district, as practical (pp. 16-29). That is, candidates will participate as part of the Leadership Team of his/her school through Data Retreats, School Culture Assessments, Instructional Rounds, etc. And we will provide shadowing opportunities for candidates with their assigned Candidate Mentors for up to eight days each year (pp. 27-29).

Course title: Cohort Year 1	Credit earned	Field experience	Shadowing, mentoring
Introduction to School Leadership (EDAD 640) - Foundations in the concepts of school leadership - Fieldwork: Candidate choice from list w/approval	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days
Building Culture and Community (EDAD 641) - Practical application of established tools for assessing and improving a school's culture and community - Fieldwork: Perform a school culture assessment	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days
Leveraging Community Systems, Resources (EDAD 642) - Utilization of state, national, and local resources; creation of collaborative support and involvement - Fieldwork: Candidate choice from list w/approval	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days



Cohort Year 1, continued...	Credit earned	Field experience	Shadowing, mentoring
Securing and Developing Staff (EDAD 643) - Human resources leadership for P-12 schools (processes, procedures in mgt. of systems/personnel) - Fieldwork: Staff inventory and projection of maintenance, human resource needs assmt., other	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days
Creating Org. Structures and Operations (EDAD 644) - Organizational leadership, procedures, and structures - Fieldwork: Audit safety plan, recommend changes; identify artifacts that support school vision; develop a professional learning activity, other	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days
Practicing the Principalship (EDAD 645) - Capstone course emphasizing leading change, reflective practice, and transitioning into the principalship. Capstone project submitted. - Fieldwork: Collaborative work w/principal on PD for teachers, chair a committee on student achievement, data analysis on student w/disabilities, other	3 hrs	30 hours	3-4 days
Course title: Cohort Year 2	Credit earned	Field experience	Shadowing, mentoring
Seminar in Education Administration (EDAD 694)	6 hrs	60 hrs	6-8 days
Cross disciplinary electives (based on need, available PD)	6 hrs	60 hrs	6-8 days
Courses will be approved by candidate's Professor of Record and will include participation in district Data Retreats, Culture Assessments, Data Team creation/organization, professional learning in PGES or other elements of the Learning 2 Lead project (approved by cohort).			

- **Candidate Mentors.** Aspiring principal candidates will be supported by Candidate Mentors who are carefully screened and selected from area school districts outside the project. Early in Year 1, the Advisory Council – composed of staff, faculty, and stakeholders from GRREC and WKU (p. 48) – will design selection criteria based on the WKU model for district support. Mentors will be invited by GRREC to participate and will receive ongoing professional learning that may be used toward their own work in the WKU doctoral program. Each will also receive a stipend for his/her work with our candidates.



Mentors will be carefully matched to candidates to ensure travel needs are reasonable and that the areas of expertise of mentors match the needs of candidates. GRREC staff will also consider the leadership styles of mentors as they are added to the pool of supporters.

Each Candidate Mentor will work within the project to support aspiring candidates through purposeful shadowing (6-8/semesters) aligned to his/her coursework and the selected performance pieces. In particular, the mentor and aspiring principal will design Year 2 performances to meet both the requirements of WKU and the needs of the aspiring principal.

Training for mentors will coincide with the training provided to our seated principals and assistant principals as part of our focus on Instructional Climate/Action (pp. 16-29). Mentors also will attend the Harvard-based Instructional Rounds training (summer 2014). While the focus of the Mentor's work will be to provide the appropriate levels of independence, oversight, and collaboration, they will also utilize cognitive coaching and critical friends models (Costa & Garmston, 1993; Costa & Kallick, 1993); mentors will focus on how the principal candidate can become more self-reflective about his or her professional growth.

In addition to shadowing, Mentors and Candidates will work electronically and by phone to review upcoming field experience assignments, identify resources and supports needed, review completed assignments, and provide/receive feedback. A WKU faculty member will be assigned to groups of mentors to monitor their activities with candidates, provide information and support, answer questions, and trouble-shoot problems that may arise.

In summarizing our work with aspiring candidates, we again pose an if / then statement based on our original hypothesis for improved school leadership (p. 1):

If we ▶ Enable and expect aspiring principals to recognize and understand what real learning looks and sounds like,



- and if we ▶ Provide those aspiring leaders specific, targeted professional learning, authentic leadership experiences, and ongoing mentoring/executive coaching to shift their knowledge and understanding,
- then we will see ▶ An increase in the effectiveness of both teachers and leaders (Goal 1, 2),
- which will result in ▶ A measurable and significant increase in overall student learning in participating schools (Goal 3).

Comprehensive efforts to improve teaching and learning. GRREC provides educational services to the 150,000 students, teachers and leaders in our 10,000-square-mile area. We exist to provide the specific instructional and management services our rural, high-poverty districts are not able to provide in a cost-effective manner, including the coordination of a bids service, grant and project learning activities, classroom coaching, and more than a 20 instructional networks and collegial groups. **Leading ▶ 2 ▶ Learn** is part of a comprehensive, multi-level effort to improve teaching and learning as demonstrated in the following select initiatives (not all-inclusive).

- **Professional learning around content, pedagogy (1968+).** For more than 40 years, GRREC has provided learning opportunities for teachers and leaders. The delivery methods have changed from one-day in-service trainings in early years to weeklong trainings with follow-up to our current model of face-to-face learning over multiple summer and school-year days with ongoing, school-based coaching and Data Team work.
- **Superintendents Network (2010+).** Superintendents from our 37 districts meeting monthly at our training facility to managed organizational business; as our “business” is education, we include in every half-day sessions substantial time for professional learning. Superintendents value these sessions, as our attendance historically tops 85 percent. From those learning opportunities has grown the Superintendents Network, which provides more direct and focused work around district-level leadership, including the work of our



Instructional Rounds process. The Network includes a north and south cohort to address issues of distance/travel. The Network provides our superintendents time and contacts to quickly solve issues as well as provide for their own collegial learning.

- **Kentucky Common Core Content State Standards (2010+).** Kentucky was the first in the nation to adopt (Feb. 2010) and fully implement (2011-12) the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Mathematics and accomplished that feat by implementing content networks through the regional cooperatives, including GRREC. With existing and KDE assigned staff, we worked with hundreds of teacher leaders in Years 1 and 2 of the effort to help them share the new standards with their school-level teacher teams. Presented in network format, teachers and instructional specialists gathered multiple times each year for guided work and the development of new learning targets. The standards are now assessed through Kentucky's new K-PREP assessment (2012+), which includes measures of individual student growth that will be tied to each teacher's performance on the PGES.
- **Instructional Supervisors Leadership Network.** The ISLN supports the ongoing roll-out and improvement of new content standards and includes work with district and school level personnel, including principals. In layman's terms, the ISLN help districts support their teachers as math, ELA, and now science standards become the norm for our classrooms. To be clear, GRREC operates the ISLN content work for our region.
- **GRREC Leadership Division (2011+).** Formalized as a separate division in 2011, the leadership work of GRREC has been clear for more than a decade. The division supports a number of initiatives for principals and superintendents, including our work around Pivotal Leadership, a program utilizing many of the components found within our SLP proposal. The Division now has responsibility for supporting the PGES in our districts and will design ongoing training for principals and district level personnel in implementing the new system.



- **Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (2012+).** Outlined on page 7-9 and 21-22, the PGES will be fully implemented in our districts in 2014-15 and will include a new way to assess teacher performance. Based on Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*, the system will provide principals a mechanism through which to observe the “teaching” rather than then “teacher.” Principals and teachers will utilize professional conversations around an observed/taught lesson to review the quality of the learning that occurred. GRREC’s role in this process will be to provide training and support for principals as they being this process (2013-14 pilot) and make it the norm for their schools (2014-15). While PGES has great potential as a tool to improve learning, it will be a challenge for principals and assistant principals to make this shift with teachers, who are fearful of the new system.

4. Design for implementing and evaluating the project will guide possible replication

GRREC is a consortium of multiple school districts – Kentucky’s largest educational service agency. Our reach throughout the region and state provides us with a large number of schools in which replication is not only possible but planned and intentional. Elements from our ongoing work in teacher learning may be found in districts throughout the state and region, including demonstration classrooms established nearly a decade ago around literacy/thinking strategies and the ongoing work of our principal, counselor, and other networks.

Our work with WKU has also been repeated throughout the region and state. For example, the SKyTEACH program to develop middle school math and science teachers is now being replicated in Louisville. An initial project through GRREC related to teacher certification is now the chief alternative certification program at WKU and is the primary route for the certification of special education teachers in the state. Through other partnerships – for example, our work with FranklinCovey – we have become the hub for expansion; we now are the state’s leading source for *The Leader in Me* training.



In addition, GRREC utilizes the data related to successful programs to further develop their potential. The GRREC Development Division, launched earlier this year, will be charged with replication of effective strategies and services throughout Kentucky and surrounding states. The division utilizes the content and pedagogical expertise of GRREC staff as well as a small team of management and sales personnel to package services and supports shown to be most effective.

Our Evaluation Plan (below) thoroughly notes our three-phase process to evaluate the implementation as well as formative and summative findings of the project and to use those findings in determining the project's positive effects. Publication opportunities are included within our WKU partnership as well as the evaluation process. And our Advisory Council will be charged with sharing information about the project in GRREC monthly board meetings, to WKU leadership (Dean, Provost), and to the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, and the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents. Each of these stakeholder groups routinely works with GRREC and WKU around improving education; and each participates in our monthly board meetings.

Finally, we will note the effect of the PGES support to be replicated statewide. GRREC has designed and will implement a support system differentiated for our districts that is separate and apart from state supports currently planned for the upcoming school year. We are working with the blessing of KDE; they will support and observe our work in all 37 GRREC districts. GRREC has dedicated significant resources in manpower, time and funding to ensure our schools are preparing and ultimately prepared for the teacher assessment system.

B. Quality of the project evaluation

GRREC operates on an annual budget of \$6-8 million. Each project has its own evaluation process based on the size, scope and audience. For **Leading 2 Learn**, we will contract with a



national evaluation firm as part of the overall evaluation of the implementation and ongoing improvement, utilizing a bid/review process (Oct. 2013). On the following pages, we will address the methods of our formative, summative, and implementation evaluations as well as our model for continuous improvement. A [logic model](#) is found on page 37.

1. Methods of evaluation include objective performance measure related to outcomes

Leadership is the catalyst to move troubled schools to success; other programs, strategies, and people certainly have an effect, but leadership is where real change begins (Leithwood, 2004). To observe that change, we will monitor the actions, attitudes, and outcomes of participants, teachers, and students. Our objective performance measures are found on pages 4-6 in our detailed Goals and Objectives and reflect three areas of impact:

- Ensuring all [schools](#) have access to highly effective principals/assistant principals (Goal 1)
- Ensuring all [students](#) have access to highly effective teachers (Goal 2)
- Ensuring [learning](#) for all students in our high-need schools (Goal 3)

As with all GRREC initiatives, our methods for evaluation include formative, summative and implementation processes to ensure we uncover ongoing findings and meet project outcomes.

Formative. Though “outside” the GRREC organization, we will work with [two groups](#) to monitor, advise, and improve **Leading 2 Learn**. Each group will serve as informed reformists, a model espoused by Dr. Huey-Tsyh Chen (*Theory-Driven Evaluations*, 1990).

- **National evaluator.** Working with a national evaluator, we will collect data for analysis throughout the project, including observation data, student achievement data, teacher and principal effectiveness data, etc. A list of anticipated qualitative and quantitative follows; this is not all-inclusive. GRREC staff, including Executive Coaches, will collect data at the direction of the Evaluator. The Kentucky CIITS system data will be utilized to link



individual teacher and classroom data to outcomes and to allow for cross-project measures of impact for comparison of strategy and implementation effectiveness.

- **Council of experts.** We will put in place a Fidelity Council, a group of educational experts who are authorities in the areas of school leadership and principal/teacher effectiveness. The team of five-to-seven members will include regional and national partners, such as state Teacher(s) of the Year, state curriculum specialists from KDE, and state educational leaders from partner associations (e.g., Kentucky Association of School Administrators). The Fidelity Council will view project implementation, activities, and data analysis from a 30,000-foot level, then provide informed guidance on next steps, new research to consider, possible solutions to implementation barriers, etc. Members will meet electronically and/or face-to-face at least quarterly; meetings will be held at participating schools as practical. Monthly updates will be provided to members by project staff.

Again, these groups will inform our work over five years, providing a third-party view of our progress. The Evaluator will review data collected by trained project staff using carefully selected and/or purchased collection instruments and observation rubrics. For example, we will observe implementation through our Instructional Rounds process (pp. 19-20) utilizing a rubric developed for that purpose, and we will use the Principal PGES to measure the effect of student-centered leadership on teachers, staff and students; the PPGES includes the VAL-ED 360-degree, research-based instrument from Discovery Education.

Initial benchmarks or milestones are also included in our Goals and Objectives. These will be refined as we begin the evaluation process early in Year 1 and will help guide our continuous improvement in a manner as ascribed to the Oxley Model of Continuous Improvement (2007; p. 49). The model includes continual monitoring of each indicator by project staff and the Advisory Council (p. 48) via monthly meetings. Ongoing findings are converted to specific,



school- and project-level action steps (updated quarterly). Data will also be available through the Kentucky CIITS system as project staff work with each principal/assistant principal.

Summative (quasi-experimental): Our summative evaluation should show improvements in student academic achievement. We will monitor student growth along the state and nationally normed measures within the state assessment system (Next Generation Accountability Model, K-PREP). The system is anchored in college and career readiness for all students and includes annual public reporting of disaggregated student outcomes by content areas. It includes:

- student achievement growth measures by student, teacher, classroom and subgroup at all levels and through multiple assessments (state and nationally normed)
- high school end of course assessments in target content areas (state and nationally normed)
- state college and career readiness standards (nationally normed)

Specific, school-level measures include interim assessments in elementary (e.g., Measures of Academic Progress [MAP] testing); content assessments in elementary and middle school; high school end of course assessments using normed items from ACT's *QualityCore* Program; and the EPAS battery of assessments for 8th, 10th, and 11th grades (EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT). Each measure is included in Kentucky's CIITS data system by individual teacher identifier and includes a teacher-student match; data can also be sorted by student subgroup, content, school, district, and more. We will include cross-project analysis through ongoing work with districts.

In addition to classroom, district, and cross-project analysis, we will use carefully matched comparison groups (multivariate matching process) to determine whether **Leading 2 Learn** schools outperform non-participant schools. Match characteristics will include similarities in rates of achievement, free/reduced lunch rates, school size, ongoing academic trends in content areas, ethnic diversity, community type (e.g., farming vs. commuter), and other factors as

appropriate. This quasi-experimental approach is a constant within our consortium projects.

Data types: Following is a list of data types that will likely be collected during our third-party evaluation. Additional measures will also be added or substituted as appropriate to the final design of the contracted national evaluator (Oct./Nov. 2013). In working with national evaluators, we have learned to include descriptive statistics and appropriate comparative analytic techniques for quantitative data secured from tests, surveys, existing achievement data, and observations. Effect sizes will be generated to determine the magnitude of statistically significant differences between groups. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey items will be analyzed thematically using both a priori and emergent coding. Narrative exploration of trends/themes and their relationships to quantitative findings will provide depth and context.

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interim assessments by individual, teachers, content, grade, school ✓ K-PREP state assessments for student achievement and growth indicators (annual) ✓ EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT ✓ Data Team attendance and participation ✓ PD attendance ✓ Discipline referrals (reflection of culture) ✓ Student course-taking (reflection of leadership direction related to learning) ✓ # of Executive Coaching sessions ✓ Kentucky TELL Survey (biennial measure) ✓ # of shadowing events ✓ WKU performance indicators (grades, other measures) ✓ Ongoing course completion (candidates) ✓ WorkKeys, ASVAB, KOSSA, KYOTE, approved industry certifications ✓ # of principal certifications by level ✓ # of recruited applicants for certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluator site visits, observations ✓ Mentor review of candidate academic progress ✓ Data Team expansion and participation levels; formative assessment quality ✓ Ongoing leadership interviews by project staff (one-on-one; focus groups) ✓ PD attendees' evaluations (event forms) ✓ Ongoing superintendent input, survey ✓ Ongoing benchmarks for culture improvement (individual to each school) ✓ Quality of peer and principal teacher observations <p style="text-align: center;">Qualitative &/or Quantitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pre/Post PPGES (principal effectiveness) ✓ Pre/Post TPGES (teacher effectiveness) ✓ School Culture Assessment ✓ Instructional Rounds observations ✓ Student Voice portion of the PGES ✓ Weekly logs of Data Team activities, results

Note: Additional measures will be added as we work with a national evaluator (Oct./Nov. 2013)



PROJECT INPUTS

Leading 2 Learn

GOALS

Advisory Council
 Program Director
 GRREC Exec. Director
 Executive Coaches (2)
 PGES Staff (3)
 Superintendent (1)
 Candidate Mentors (2)
 WKU Faculty (3)

LEAs
 GRREC
 4 Member LEAs
 23 Participating Schools
 20-38 Principals/Asst.
 800 Teachers
 14,000 Students
 60 Aspiring Principals

Ongoing Partners
 Western KY University
 Department of Educational
 Administration,
 Leadership & Research
 The Leadership
 & Learning Center
 The Center for Improving
 School Culture

Continuous Improvement
 External Evaluator

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Culture Assessment
 A 5-day observation and interview process to gather and analyze data to determine patterns of thinking around student learning.

Data Analysis Cycle
 Data Retreats help schools determine the "right" work; then Instructional Rounds are used to observe classroom improvements.

Data Teams
 The "how" of the work, PLCs must focus on student work, not staff duties; principals must lead using new norms to develop teacher capacity.

Instructional Rounds
 Rounds will help each school monitor and address a focused problem of practice identified through a Data Retreat.

Executive Coaching

Coaching as a leadership improvement tool translates into **action by the leader**, which leads to impacts that are quantifiable:

- ▶ Increases effectiveness of the leader by facilitating, deepening professional learning
- ▶ Eliminates evaluative nature of support
- ▶ Provides continual, ongoing follow-up (Edwards, 2002; Gorham, 2008; McGovern, 2001)

Candidate Mentoring

Aspiring Candidates will have the ongoing support of a professional in the field to support new learning and application.

- ▶ Shadowing up to 8 days per year
- ▶ Ongoing review of performance pieces
- ▶ Support of problem-based, graduate-level

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project Products

Action/Improvement Plans for principals/asst. prin.
 School Culture Plans
 Data Team norms, action steps
 Embedded data analysis practices, methods
 Principal candidate pool
 Principal certifications

Formative Measures

Site visits
 Coaching reports
 Completed tasks
 Culture assessments
 Training event evaluations, attendance
 Participation levels
 Ongoing surveys
 Data Team agendas

Annual / Summative

TPGES / PPGES of increased principal, teacher effectiveness
 Improved student academic outcomes
 Principal certifications

- #1 To ensure all schools have access to highly effective principals/assistant principals
- #2 To ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers
- #3 To ensure learning for all students in our high-need schools

Objectives (not all inclusive)

Increased effectiveness rating of principals • Increase effectiveness rating of teachers • Increased # of students at/above proficiency on state assmts • Increased student performance on EPAS • Increased student performance on state End of Course assmts • Improved disciplinary, attendance factors • Increased availability of high-quality school leaders

Outcomes (not all inclusive)

Increased principal effectiveness in 20 schools • Certification of up to 60 principal candidates • More than 800 teachers working in Data Teams, implementing new Instructional Actions • 14,000 students exposed to effective/highly-effective teachers and leaders

We also will ensure evaluation procedures and processes adhere to industry standards for high-quality research and ethical conduct, e.g., Guiding Principles for Evaluators (American Evaluation Association, 2005) and the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2010).

2. Methods of evaluation include objective performance measure related to implementation

Implementing a program in a school with a high degree of fidelity will ensure the effects in one location may also be seen in another. That is, we must deliver the program at each location in the “way in which [it was] designed and intended to be delivered.” (NCRI in Protheroe, 2009; p. 2)

Therefore, we will guide and monitor implementation of the overall project as well as the implementation at each school, with each principal/assistant principal, and with each aspiring principal candidate. This will include whether professional learning or ongoing findings are acquired and strategies are implemented in the schoolhouse. For example, as the School Culture Profile is designed, we will monitor whether principals/assistant principals continue to follow the recommendations or action steps created. Measures will include the benchmarking indicated for that component as well as process outcomes related to resulting training events, observations, and other collected data. Classroom instructional change, as another example of a key indicator, will be seen through the Instructional Rounds process and Data Teams. In addition, all professional learning will be reviewed through the lenses of Guskey’s five-level model for evaluating professional learning (Guskey, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003).

Our evaluator will monitor timelines developed as part of this proposal and refined during early implementation (Oct.-Nov. 2013). With project staff, the Evaluator will determine whether schools are meeting specific milestones related to training events, development of improvement plans and Culture Profiles, expansion of the existing school-level PLCs to Data teams, cohort



course completion, etc. We will compare the levels of success in terms of the levels of implementation by component and by school.

3. Methods of evaluation will provide feedback and permit periodic assessment

The Evaluator will regularly provide project staff with data and findings through a rapid-response feedback loop (in person and/or regularly-scheduled conference calls); this will ensure formative information regarding progress toward performance goals will be timely enough to support any changes that may be warranted to improve implementation. As noted, our evaluator – though outside the organization – will understand the inner workings of the project to enable reforms based on periodic findings (Chen, 1990). S/He will work closely with the Advisory Council (p. 48), meeting formally at least quarterly; ongoing communication will include sessions with project staff by phone or face-to-face (least bi-weekly during initial implementation, monthly thereafter).

As noted above, project staff will work with individual principals/assistant principals, schools, and candidates to create appropriate action steps related to findings through our ongoing assessments. Other specific actions include:

- Site visits by the Project Director and Executive Coaches to schools monthly (collectively)
- Focus groups, surveys and confidential feedback to the evaluator and staff
- Ongoing mentor reports related to tasks, networking and more (formal and anecdotal)

WKU faculty will monitor individual candidate progress; they will consider and recommend changes to the curriculum and/or participant supports throughout. As a practical matter, course assignments will change as indicated by faculty and current events (reality-based). Our feedback cycle is also discussed on pages 48-49.

C. Significance

Leithwood put it best: There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst. (2004; p. 5)

1. Potential contribution of the project to increased knowledge and understanding

If leadership must change for school improvement to occur, then we must either change leaders (that is, get new principals) or change the impact of each individual leader through professional learning and support. **Leading 2 Learn** addresses the issue of the principalship from both directions: providing a supported framework for professional learning and the creation of a pool of new principals who have received their certification through principal-like experiences. At least three elements of our project have the potential to increase knowledge and understanding in the field: Executive Coaching, Rural Principal Development, Blended/Hybrid Preparation Programs. Each is detailed below (p. 41).

In developing a dissemination plan for ongoing and summative findings, we will turn to our partner, WKU. The university's faculty members have a long history of publication within the relevant literature and will work collaboratively with project staff, GRREC educators, our evaluator, and our partner schools' participants to contribute to the research literature.

Submissions to relevant publications will begin at the end of Year 2 and continue throughout the project. Initially, we will relate the overall methodology and early findings from teacher implementation along with preliminary student academic improvements. Submissions will be written to align to the specific needs of our key audiences, including articles targeting researchers, practitioners and leaders within education. Our evaluator also will participate in the publication process. We anticipate s/he will be located within easy travel distance of our region,

providing opportunities for ongoing sessions to review findings; the metropolitan areas of Nashville and Louisville are within two hours driving distance while Memphis, Indianapolis and St. Louis are four hours away.

Professional Learning + Executive Coaching. The literature thoroughly documents the effects of leadership on school improvement (Knapp, 2010; Leithwood, 2005, 2006; Louis 2010). What is lacking is evidence regarding the types of principal professional learning needed to impact principals' behaviors and their practice. Again, Gorham notes the importance of non-evaluative, ongoing support for principals as they lead change (2008). However, an opportunity to impact the field of educational leadership is clear, as we bring together individual strategies shown to be effective both in the literature and in the GRREC region with the addition of a new supporting mechanism (Executive Coach, pp. 17-18). **Leading 2 Learn** provides a framework to improve a principal's ability to lead school-wide improvement; Executive Coaches ensure ongoing support.

Rural Principal Development. Much of the current research around school leadership is focused on urban centers. However, the issues related to school leadership in a small community are magnified. The school principal is, in effect, one of the largest employers in area; often, his/her own children attend the same school, and the principal's family likely attends the same church and community functions as his/her faculty. Because our principals are often from these small towns and counties, they likely are now supervising former classmates and working with the children of longtime acquaintances. Our findings in terms of both the principal preparation program and the ongoing professional learning and coaching will benefit the field with regard to this population (high-poverty, rural, low-performing).

Blended/Hybrid Principal Preparation Program. Some research exists related to the levels of effectiveness for principals trained through traditional university programs and those trained



through alternative certification routes. However, the literature is limited with regard to models that combine the two – that is, blended learning through university-based programs. WKU faculty have begun already to consider the impacts of their work and will use this partnership to provide an appropriate treatment group, data collection, site visits, etc. GRREC and WKU often work in this regard; more than a dozen of our federal research efforts have been collaboratively administered, analyzed and reported.

2. The likelihood the project will result in system change or improvement

In addition to the specific improvements to our schools outlined within our Goals and Objectives and throughout this narrative proposal, **Leading 2 Learn** will bring about system changes to schools, districts, our partner university and the region. Examples of these changes include new strategies that will remain embedded in our schools, new processes that will be shared within GRREC and beyond, and improved skills that will remain in use for the long term. Here we provide a few detailed examples of the systems that will be changed or improved.

Data-based decision-making processes. The Data Retreat, Data Teams, and Instructional Rounds processes will remain in place in our schools. Understanding and using data to improve student learning will become the norm for these school leaders and their Leadership Teams.

Protocols for recruiting and hiring principals. We will create training sessions for principal selection committees (SBDM Councils, pp. 24-25) to increase their knowledge and understanding of the skills and characteristics needed to be a highly effective principal. The training will remain part of GRREC's Leadership Division for use in later years and in other districts; and our participating schools and SBDM Councils will continue to utilize their new skills as they fill principal vacancies moving forward.



Blended/Hybrid Principal Preparation Program. WKU’s revised principal preparation program has been approved by the Educational Professional Standards Board; the university will implement the program in the fall. Through this project, WKU will be able to establish the mentoring and performance review pieces that are key to utilizing a blended learning model. Training for principal selection committees through the project as well as the recruiting efforts that will occur will further embed the program within these communities and in the region.

Supports for the PGES. All school districts in Kentucky will implement the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System in 2014-15. GRREC is currently working to develop trainings aligned with the Kentucky Department of Education’s roll-out of the statewide pilot; as noted on pages 21-22, we will further inform and embed that work as part of **Leading 2 Learn**. Our additional support will help us more quickly alleviate the fears of classroom teachers as they begin working with principals through professional conversations to improve their own practice.

3. Magnitude of the results, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement

As stated by the Wallace Foundation in its January 2013 report, the ability of effective school leaders to improve student achievement is “second only to classroom instruction.” (p. 5)

In McREL’s 2003 meta analysis of 30 years of research in leadership and student achievement, the impact strong leadership can have on low performing schools is demonstrable; an increase in leadership ability within a school translates to a 10 percentile point increase in student scores.

Other reports indicate as much as a 20 percent impact on student achievement based on principal leadership (Leithwood, 2004). Inversely, leaders with lesser ability or who are focusing on the wrong things can have a marginal or negative impact on achievement (Waters, 2003).

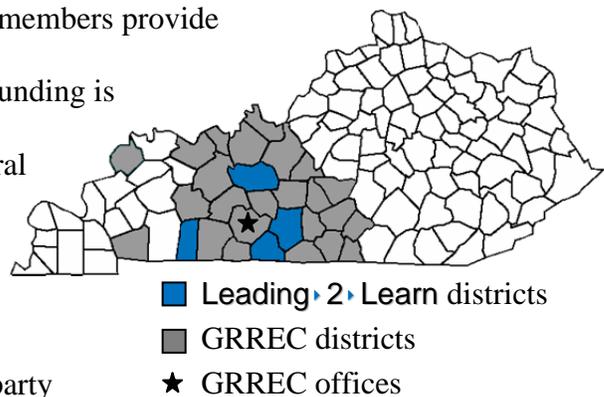
We are also confident student achievement will increase and will set specific school-level targets based on the reports noted above; our evaluator will provide statistical support for this



process. Project outcomes (pp. 4-6) include creating a new pool of principal candidates and providing students with highly effective teachers and leaders as we are carefully targeting schools and school leaders from our neediest schools. First, each of our four districts is a high-poverty, low-performing school in a small rural community. Second, we will work with principals and assistant principals with the greatest level of need. On page 17, we outlined a selection process for our current principal/assistant principals based on the School Culture Assessment. In addition, our own initial data analysis of the 23 schools in these districts indicates our eight middle and high school – with 25 principals/assistant principals – have the greatest need. All schools will receive the School Culture Assessment to further secure our findings.

D. Quality of the management plan

GRREC is located in Bowling Green, Kentucky; we annually support 140,000 students in 250 PreK-12 schools. Each initiative – regardless of funding source – is operated on time and within budget. Our 75 educational and administrative staff members provide services through an annual budget of \$6-8 million; funding is diversified through membership fees, state and federal grants, sponsorships, and fees-for-services. Each initiative has a half- or full-time director and a clear summative and formative evaluation led by a third-party evaluator. All staff report to the Executive Director directly or through his leadership team.



1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve objectives on time...

It is the whole purpose of our organization to support leaders as they work to meet the various and specific needs of multiple schools and their students. For example, we have implemented three Transition to Teaching projects, creating with Western Kentucky University an alternative



certification path that has prepared hundreds of new teachers for hard-to-fill teaching vacancies. Our Early Reading First project embedded full-day preschool in five of our elementary schools and has nearly eliminated Kindergarten gaps in early literacy skills for those schools. And we have operated a number of state Math/Science Partnership projects, utilizing highly-skilled math and science teachers as half-time coordinators. We also create, coordinate and present year-long learning opportunities – most of which are fee-generating. These have focused, for example, on thinking and literacy strategies, the high-yield strategies of Marzano, and creating the student-centered classroom. Here, we propose the same management structure that has supported these and numerous other GRREC projects and initiatives.

A strong, experienced project director (to be hired). S/He will be hired in October 2013 and will be a highly qualified instructional leader with demonstrated leadership ability. The Director will manage day-to-day activities and support the ongoing professional learning of principals and assistant principals in each school. The Director will guide the work of the Executive Coaches, the Advisory Council, and Evaluator; s/he will also work alongside faculty from WKU as they complete the development of the Candidate Mentor selection and training process. S/He will schedule and assist in the School Culture Assessments, helping each principal develop and implement a personal Improvement Plan. From those assessments and an expanded needs assessment, the Director will work with the Advisory Council to make final selection of the principals/assistant principals who will receive the intense professional learning outlined in **Leading 2 Learn**. As principals continue to prepare for and implement the PGES requirements, s/he will work with GRREC and WKU specialists to design/acquire and utilize training sessions, and one-on-one supports. The Director will make site visits to each school year-round to monitor the Culture Profiles and principal Improvement Plans; collect data; observe Data Teams; and



more. She/He will report to GRREC Executive Director. A job description with educational requirements and qualifications is included in the Appendix.

Skilled support staff (to be hired). Two highly-effective school leaders will be hired as Executive Coaches. The Coaches will be trained in various processes of the initiative (Rounds, Data Retreats, etc.); and they will have skills in coaching/mentoring, particularly in Cognitive Coaching⁴. They will be matched to school principals and assistant principals based both on their skills in working with specific school levels (elementary, middle, high school) and the challenges each principal may face. Much thought has gone into whether these positions should be part- or full-time employees or contracted professional; but, in order to ensure the caliber of coaching candidates and to have the time for training and support of the coaches, it was apparent full-time positions would be the most effective. A job description with educational requirements and qualifications is included in the Appendix. In addition, we will hire a highly-organized Administrative Assistant to help with scheduling, event coordination, supplies, and ongoing communications. These support staff will be supervised by the Project Director.

Existing GRREC staff members. We will call upon the educational expertise of our own staff members, including but not limited to the following. Each will serve on the Advisory Council, and each will support the project (organizational in-kind). Resumes are attached for each.

- George Wilson, GRREC Executive Director. Mr. Wilson is a former middle school principal, superintendent of a rural school district, and a trainer for the Instructional Rounds process. He has led our cooperative since 2010.
- Melissa Biggerstaff, Associate Director for Leadership. Mrs. Biggerstaff is a former elementary school principal and a national trainer for the Leadership & Learning Center. She

⁴ GRREC has developed more than 200 Cognitive Coaches in the region over the past 5 years.

is a leader of GRREC's Data Retreat, and Data Team efforts, and is the direct supervisor for all PGES staff (below).

- PGES Staff (Abell, Cassady, Hurley). In June, GRREC announced the addition of staff members dedicated to the implementation of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System, which will be implemented in all Kentucky school in 2014-15. Our PGES staff members are developing resources to help principals and assistant principals prepare for this new type of teacher assessment. Resumes are attached.

WKU leadership faculty. Dr. Gary Houchens and Dr. Jill Cabrera will serve on the Advisory Council and work alongside the Project Director to prepare our Aspiring Candidates for the principalship. Drs. Houchens and Cabrera are professors from the Department Educational Administration, Leadership & Research in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at Western Kentucky University. With our project staff, they will ensure proper selection of and training for Candidate Mentors and will verify the quality of the relationships Mentors build with our Aspiring Candidates. Houchens/Cabrera will also make site visits to our schools, work with the Evaluator as we finalize the evaluation design, selection/design of instruments, etc. As the lead instructors for the principal program at WKU, they will also be responsible for monitoring the graduate coursework and performance products of each principal candidate. GRREC has a long-standing relationship with the EALR department, the College of Education, and, more specifically, Drs. Houchens and Cabrera; the two are ongoing partners with us on a number of efforts related to school leadership.

A clear summative and formative evaluation process. To ensure projects are achieving their intended outcomes, all projects utilize the services of a third-party evaluator (pp. 33-34+).

A record of fiscal responsibility. GRREC manages millions of dollars annually. Our annual



independent audits, which comply with the OMB standards for A-133, are finding-free.

Timeline, milestones. A semester-based timeline begins on page 49 and includes specific milestones that must be met (training events, site visits, candidate selection). These key activities are not all-inclusive but do lay out the primary tasks to be monitored throughout the project.

2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement

Continuous improvement will be the role of the project **Advisory Council**, a 12-member work group representative of project participants and stakeholders (chart). The Council will meet in whole at least monthly in the first eight months of the project, as key elements are developed. Beginning in August 2014, they will meet bi-monthly or quarterly to monitor data and to continue their oversight of progress; subsets of the Advisory Council will meet more frequently (almost weekly). Much of the work also may be done electronically, with documents, rubrics, and training curriculum developed/shared virtually.

The implementation and operation of **Leading 2 Learn** provides an iterative process to enable GRREC and WKU faculty an opportunity to continually improve upon outcomes of the previous year. In addition, Council members bring an assortment of perspectives – from the district, school, university and GRREC. Each Council meeting will include specific appraisals of the project components as well as data collected in the field. To guide the ongoing project progress, we will begin with a series of questions related to the formative improvement:

Advisory Council
Project Director, TBD
Wilson, Executive Director
Executive Coaches (TBD, 2)
PGES Staff (3)
District Superintendent (1)
Candidate Mentors (2)
WKU (Houchens, Cabrera)

Accountability Did program staff do what they were assigned to do? Are participants working effectively together? Are candidates completing assignments as intended? Are principals attending trainings and mentor sessions?



Effectiveness How well are activities and strategies being implemented? Are objectives being met? What problems have emerged? What steps were taken to solve those problems? To what degree are new ideas considered? Implemented?

Impact What changes in teachers/student behaviors are seen? Which project components are linked to specific areas of change? To what degree is student achievement improving relative to the rate of implementation?

Replicability Which program components can be easily taken to scale to serve additional GRREC districts? Other schools? Which elements are sustainable in whole, in part and/or with modifications? Which elements aren't working?

In asking these questions, the Project Director and Evaluator will a) determine whether objectives are likely to be met during the year, and b) guide participants and partners toward improvement based on ongoing findings (formative). This follows the seven-step Oxley Model of Continuous Improvement utilized in all GRREC programs. The model includes taking stock of existing practice; identifying gaps between existing and desired practice; generating and studying strategies to adopt; developing consensus for adopting strategies; devising an implementation or action plan; creating a plan to monitor the implementation; and finally, implementing the plan for improvement.

Leading 2 Learn Milestones	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Responsibility
	Year 1	Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5					
Project awarded, Sept. 30, 2013																
Press release, job postings, Oct. 1, 2013	x															Executive Director (Wilson)
Proj. Director, Exec. Coaches in place Nov. 1	x															Executive Director (Wilson)
Bid/Consider evaluator; in place by Nov. 15	x															Exec. and Project Director
Advisory, Fidelity councils meet (ongoing*)															→	Project Director
Formal kick-off with schools by mid-Nov.	x															Project Director, Coaches
Baseline info compiled, analyzed (Dec. 1)	x															Project Director, Evaluator
School Culture Assessments (Oct. 15-Feb. 28)	→															Project Director, Coaches
Schools/Principals selected based on expanded needs assessment (20 principals/asst. prin.)	→															Project Director, Coaches, Advisory Council, Evaluator
Candidate Mentor criteria for finalized	x															WKU faculty, Adv. Council
Teacher leaders, others recruited, selected																Project Director, WKU faculty, Advisory Council
‣ 4 recruitment events/year	→			→			→			→			→			
‣ Applications received (March annually)		x			x			x			x			x		
‣ Candidates selected (April/May annually)		x			x			x			x			x		
Mentors recruited, selected <u>annually</u> for each new cohort and as replacements (as needed)		x			x			x			x					Proj. Director, WKU faculty
PGES: Prof. Growth & Effectiveness System																Project Director, Coaches, GRREC PGES specialists (Abell, Cassady, Hurley)
‣ Piloted, one school in each district	→															
‣ Training/Support for all principals/asst.															→	
‣ Fully implemented in all schools															→	



Milestones continued...	Fall	Spring	Summer	Responsibility												
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5			
Data Retreats facilitated Yr 1 and 5; repeated locally each year; monitored year-round		x	x												x	GRREC Data Retreat Team, Project Director, Coaches
National experts train principals/assistant principals on Data Teams, leadership (ongoing; including online and site-based support)																Project Director, GRREC Leadership Division
Local PLCs expand from PLCs to Data Teams; principals support teachers in shift					x	x										Project Director, GRREC Leadership Division
Harvard-based Instructional Rounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Training for Staff, Faculty, Mentors, Yr 1 ▸ Modeled in host schools; principals trained in Year 2; embedded in Yr. 3 (gradual rel.) 			x		→				→			→			→	Project Director, Executive Director, Coaches, WKU, Mentors
Exec. Coaches work 1-on-1 w/prin., asst. prin.; create/review principal improvement plans																Executive Coaches
Training for local principal selection committees (Site Based councils; annually)			x			x			x				x			Project Director, Coaches, WKU faculty
Principal Candidate cohorts begin, Mentors assigned, shadowing/support begins (3 cohorts)									→			→			→	WKU faculty, Mentors
Ongoing Evaluator site visits (4-6/year)																Evaluator
Ongoing Director site visits (4-6/semester)																Project Director
*Evaluator reporting to the Advisory Council and Fidelity Council (project staff/stakeholders) will be at least quarterly. In addition, the Advisory Council will work with schools and the Evaluator to design improvements/action steps related to ongoing findings – particularly as our cross-school analyses uncover strategies with exceptional impact in our rural, high-poverty schools.																

