

## Developing the 21st Century Principal Assessment Center (D21)

Students in the Educational Leadership Program have the option to attend an all-day session to participate in an authentic assessment developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. This process is designed to capture many of the key issues and leadership challenges facing school leaders. The process creates a complex educational simulation that presents participants with many difficult leadership challenges. With no right or wrong answers, the assessment focuses on the overall impact of each participant's leadership efforts and the effect on the school. Practicing and retired educational leaders who have been trained in the D21 serve as the assessors. Immediate feedback is provided and a formal assessment form is provided for the student several weeks after the event.

The four educational simulations included in the D21 assessment are:

1. Performance Evaluation System Exercise -The Leaderless Group Activity
2. Performance Evaluation System Exercise The Presentation to the School Board activity
3. Parent Interaction Exercise
4. In-Basket Exercise

The D21 assessment provides an overall skill rating based on a five-level rubric which is categorized as follows:

5 = Strength

4 = Competency

3 = Developmental Zone

2 = Noticeable Problem Area

1 = Derailer

If a student's overall skill is not deemed satisfactory by two professors involved in the assessment process, the student must develop an improvement plan with the program of study committee and adviser. The improvement plan could include taking the written comprehensive examination at the next regularly scheduled time.

## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM EXERCISE

### Exercise Summary

The Performance Evaluation System (PES) exercise has multiple parts:

1. While working on the In-Basket, the participant encounters a memo from the superintendent regarding the school board's decision to explore a new teacher performance evaluation system. The superintendent indicates that this topic will be one of the items on the agenda for the administrative leadership team meeting later that day. The superintendent requests that each principal individually prepare written suggestions about what information to take to the school board personnel committee and to be prepared to share them at the leadership team meeting.
2. All the participants come to the meeting and are informed that the superintendent has been detained and that they are expected to proceed without him. Total time allotted for the meeting is 25 minutes. They are instructed that someone must report to the board personnel committee in place of the superintendent and each of them is to assume they are that person. The presentation to the board must not exceed seven minutes. The group is instructed to begin their leadership team meeting.
3. At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants are instructed that they may return to their offices and prepare their presentations. The first scheduled presentation takes place 20 minutes after the conclusion of the team meeting. Since the presentations are staggered at 10-minute intervals, the participants are informed that they may return to working on any unfinished in-basket item at any time.
4. Each participant makes an oral report to a simulated board committee, which is video recorded.

### Facility Requirements

One room is required for the group meeting and two rooms are required for the board reports so two presentations can take place concurrently. The team meeting room must be large enough to accommodate all six participants seated at two tables and the video equipment used for recording the exercise. Depending on the size of the room used for the In-Basket exercise, that same space might be used for the group meeting by setting tables in the center of the room. If the In-Basket room is too small, a separate room will be required. The two rooms used for the board reports must be large enough to accommodate one participant and the video equipment used for recording the exercise. The same rooms used for the Parent Interaction exercise may be used for this part of the PES exercise. If space is limited, the room used for the group meeting (except if it took place in the In-Basket room) may be reset to serve as one of the rooms for the board reports.

## PARENT INTERACTION EXERCISE

### Exercise Summary

The Parent Interaction Exercise (PI) is an individual activity performed by each participant with no assessors present. The exercise provides participants with an opportunity to demonstrate multiple skills by preparing for a meeting and responding to a parent played by a role player. The exercise is video recorded. The participant must leave the In-Basket work to meet with Chris Russell (a role player) to discuss a situation concerning Nicholas Russell, the parent's son. Up to 20 minutes are allotted for the meeting. The parent has initiated this meeting by writing a letter to the principal. Several items in the participant's In-Basket contain related information—In-Basket Item #3 and In-Basket Item #16. Nicholas Russell is a student in Ms. Washington's classroom. David Bradley is a special needs student in the same class. Chris Russell is distressed over David's behavior, which the parent perceives as disruptive to the entire class. The parent believes that David should be removed from the class because the amount of attention he demands is causing the entire class to fall behind and thereby putting the other children, including Nicholas, at a disadvantage.

Chris Russell has enlisted the support of other parents, although they are not at this meeting. Chris and the other parents plan to speak at the open school board meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup> (the next day in the simulation) if the problems they identify remain unsolved.

### Facility Requirements

Two rooms, separate from the room where the In-Basket exercise is taking place, are required so two PI exercise meetings can take place concurrently. The rooms should be in close proximity to the In-Basket exercise room, and they must be at a location free from distraction. Each room must be large enough to accommodate the participant, the role player, and the video equipment used for recording the exercise.

### Time Requirements

A total of one hour and fifteen minutes is scheduled for this activity. During this time, three rounds of two concurrent PI meetings take place. Meetings are scheduled in 25 minute intervals.

### Materials and Setup

1. The room must have a desk or table with writing space for the participant and role player and an appropriate number of chairs.
2. There are no materials for this exercise other than the related in-basket items. Typically the participant brings one or more of these items to the conference; however, they are not coached to do so other than a statement in the In-Basket exercise directions.

## IN-BASKET EXERCISE

### Exercise Summary

The In-Basket Exercise (IB) is an individual activity performed by each participant with no assessors present. The exercise provides participants with an opportunity to demonstrate multiple skills by responding to a variety of written and electronic correspondence, reports, and other information relating to the school. Each participant assumes the role of a newly appointed principal at the Lincoln School in the Riverhead Community School District. Each participant receives two packets of materials: 1) a variety of letters, memos, e-mails, faxes, telephone messages, reports, and other information regarding the school and the Riverhead Community School District and 2) background information about the school. The background materials also serve as an information source for each of the subsequent simulations including: 1) the Parent Interaction Exercise (PI), which involves a meeting with a parent and 2) the Performance Evaluations System Exercise (PES), which involves a principals' meeting and school board meeting presentation. An optional Teacher Discussion Exercise (TD), which involves a meeting with a teacher in the school, may replace PI or PES or be added. The participants are experiencing their first day in the office.

### Facility Requirements

One room large enough to accommodate six participants at individual tables. Because of the nature of the exercise, each participant's workstation must have ample separation in order to reduce distraction when participants travel to and from the other exercises.

### Time Requirements

A total of four hours is scheduled for this exercise. It begins immediately after the participant orientation session and it continues intermittently throughout the entire assessment period. During this time, participants are interrupted for the Parent Interaction and Performance Evaluation System exercises.

### Materials and Setup

1. The room in which the participants perform this exercise should be well lighted and well ventilated. Although the director will remind participants of their upcoming meetings, a clock should be visible for all participants to help them better manage their time. A large work surface should be provided for each participant to sort and spread out papers.
2. Each participant should be provided with a tablet, post-it note pad, highlighter pen, pen, and pencils. The assessment materials include two separate packets, one titled *In-Basket Items* and the other titled *In-Basket Background Information*. The background materials may be copies on color paper to make it easier for participants to keep the two packets separate. All the in-basket items are the same for each participant except for a schedule. The schedule must be prepared in advance and inserted with the In-Basket Items packet. To aid with organization, the materials are inserted in an envelope and labeled appropriately (e.g., Participant #1, Participant #2, etc.). All the materials and supplies should be placed on the appropriate desks prior to the participants arriving.

### Equipment Needs

1. Seven computers (ideally laptops) – Six to be used by participants and assessors and one to be used by the director. Participants respond to the in-basket items (e.g., writes emails, letters, memos, reports, etc.) using a response form that was loaded on the computers.