

Engagement for Success: Development of a Competency Model for Negotiating with Partnering Colleges and Universities in Middle Georgia

Overview

Innovation at a Glance

Highly successful leaders from six of the seven districts in the Middle Georgia Regional Education Service Agency (MGRESA) region were chosen by superintendents to collaboratively develop a competency model for aspiring leaders seeking PL6 certification. The need for this competency model tool was identified when the MGRESA district superintendents made a joint decision to negotiate with partnering colleges and universities as a region instead of independently. This initiative, which was led by Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) personnel and supported through MGRESA, targeted the following major gaps in leadership identified through extensive GLISI research:

- The Pipeline Gap – The need to better manage leader preparation, assignment, performance, development, and succession to solve leader quality and supply problems.
- The Knowing-Doing Gap – The need to help employees better transfer learning into effective practice to reduce the number of underperforming leaders.
- The Implementation Gap – The need to better plan, align, monitor, manage, and execute initiatives, programs, and/or strategies to reduce the number of underperforming schools.

Impact at a Glance

The competency model the MGRESA leaders developed provided a consistent framework of expectations and a succinct means of communicating to partnering colleges and universities the skills and knowledge desired of aspiring leaders as they assumed leadership positions. Additionally, the document described what implementation of the leadership skill or task might look like in a performance-based environment, gave recommendations for assessment, and suggested the most appropriate time of year for the task to ensure that the work would add value to the organization.

The Impact Story

Background/Context

With the new requirements from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission regarding leadership certification, the MGRESA districts wanted to know the impact these requirements would have on districts, specifically as they related to system and university partnerships. Certification now requires real-work evidence of on-the-job performance and requires districts and preparation programs to closely coordinate candidate opportunities to practice and to prepare candidates based on the employment and improvement needs of the district. Based on these changes, the MGRESA districts agreed to unify their efforts and develop expectations of

leadership in their area to become a conglomerate group that could work as one when negotiating with different universities to establish partnerships.

The new regulations created concern for both district and university partners. A sense of urgency existed for both the university partners who needed time to prepare for incoming cohorts but had a short timeline, and also for the districts who wanted time to define leadership, develop their expectations, and gain Boards of Education approval for the process before entering negotiations. Much conversation among the superintendents centered on candidate acceptance into the university programs. Because of the diversity of these districts, it was mutually agreed that each district would establish its own selection criteria for those seeking PL6 certification.

What Was Done?

The districts involved in the development of this work included Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, and Twiggs. These MGRESA districts made a decision to enter negotiations with Georgia College and State University, Valdosta State University, Georgia State University, West Georgia College, Georgia Southern University, and Mercer University. As one of the first steps in this process, GLISI staff members were asked to conduct an overview session with regional superintendents about new educational leadership certification standards, specifically as they relate to establishing partnerships with colleges and universities. This session resulted in the sanctioning of a task force that included superintendent-appointed leadership personnel from each district, RESA personnel, and GLISI personnel. GLISI personnel trained the team in using the Competency Model for Educational Leaders (based on the GLISI 8 Roles of School Leaders™), leading the team to identify the skills desired of those who would be assuming leadership positions within districts as they became available.

The team of approximately 25 district leaders worked in four groups with each district represented within each group. The small groups, facilitated by GLISI personnel or RESA personnel trained in the Competency Model process, were each assigned two of the eight competency areas and charged with identifying priority skills within each area. After coming to group consensus on the desired competencies within each of the eight competency areas, recommendations were presented to the larger group for consideration and, ultimately, adoption. This session resulted in a document that identified competencies and skills desired of those who complete an L6 certification/degree program with partnering colleges and universities in the MGRESA districts.

At this point, it became evident to the group that further work was needed in order to develop a quality product that clearly delineated expectations for what this work should look like in an environment that was both performance-based and focused on the real work of schools and districts. The GLISI consultant and MGRESA director received approval from the MGRESA Board of Control to reconvene the team to continue this work. This continued work not only centered on what the competency might look like in a performance-based environment, but provided recommendations as to how the task might be assessed and the location and time of year that is most appropriate for completing the task as real work of the school district. GLISI

Performance-based Modules were correlated to the tasks as well as rubric expectations from the draft copy of the Leader Keys document, which was provided by the Georgia Department of Education.

After developing an acceptable draft of the competency model with supporting details, the proposal was submitted to the MGRESA superintendents in a RESA Board of Control meeting. The Board of Control recommended that input be obtained from a few of the partnering university representatives prior to entering negotiations. At this point, a GLISI representative and the MGRESA Director met with two university partners. Both university representatives expressed confidence that the work was compatible with their initial proposals to the PSC and offered specific ideas for ensuring that the integrity of the document was upheld. The university representatives took the document to their departments and conducted a crosswalk with their PSC proposal. Following this, a meeting was scheduled with the GLISI consultant and MGRESA Director to discuss any concerns related to the crosswalk, and final recommendations were made. The proposal was then submitted to other partnering universities for their perusal before entering negotiations. Finally, negotiations were scheduled between the university partners and the superintendents.

What were the Results?

The result of this collaborative effort was the development of a competency model that provides clear expectations as to the knowledge and skills the MGRESA school districts expect of leaders who receive a PL6 degree or certification from partnering colleges and universities. Leadership has been defined specific to the needs of the region and a model for achieving the desired results has been provided.

What was the Impact?

The result of this unique partnership has implications for both the school districts and the university partners. School districts will have an available pool of leadership candidates trained in work that is specific to their strategic goals and needs, they will have the advantage of having aspiring leaders conducting the work in real time based on real needs, and they will benefit from an infusion of best practices in the everyday work of the school district. Time lost to developing competency of new leaders will be minimized, as these leaders will be thoroughly indoctrinated in the strategic goals of the districts and the priority skills needed to meet targeted objectives. The partnering universities will have a specified curriculum founded in best practices, with recommendations for performance-based activities and a means of assessment provided. Additionally, they will have suggested resources delineated within each of the GLISI 8 Roles of School Leaders™.

The collaborative nature of the work has had intended as well as unintended consequences. Rich conversation emerged among leaders of the six districts and a forum for the sharing of ideas and exploring opportunities was created. This dialogue resulted in the sharing of success cases within each district and an opportunity to think deeply about programmatic needs. The conversations with university partners were unprecedented as the needs of districts were discussed openly and joint ownership of regional success was assumed. It is anticipated that

the established partnerships will result in increased communication among districts, university preparation programs, RESAs, the Department of Education, and GLISI. This spirit of collaboration creates an environment of mutual responsibility for leadership development and ultimately student success.

Next Steps

Next steps include finalizing negotiation plans, signing partnership agreements, selecting candidates, and implementing the programs based on desired competencies. Of primary concern to the districts is the sustainability, monitoring, and revision of the partnership based on identified needs. As part of the agreement, a timeline was added for reviewing the current plan. GLISI has been asked to assist in helping to develop selection criteria rubrics for several districts and will be available for revisions as needed.