



# Virginia Principal Support Program

**Division Partnership  
Manual 2023-2024**

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## Welcome from the Dean

Dear Colleagues,

The Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP) is an exciting collaboration between James Madison University's College of Education and Virginia school divisions. We have assembled a network of colleagues and partners to provide early career principal support through principal advising and professional learning across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Principal advisors, partnered with early-career principals, engage in developing core leadership competencies and skills that enhance leadership efficacy. Focusing on what matters most in leadership and learning, principal advisors and early-career principals engage in critical conversations using the National Professional Standards for Educational Leadership, Virginia Department of Education Principal Performance Standards, and the Profile of a Virginia Leader. Purposeful professional learning builds a shared language of professional standards and serves as an essential component of the professional educator continuum.

The importance of supporting quality principal leadership cannot be overstated. Improving professional growth and support systems for school leaders can strengthen the principal workforce, improve leader effectiveness, improve teacher impact, and reduce teacher attrition in Virginia's classrooms. Investing in early career principal learning and development will have a significant and positive impact on the outcomes of learning of students across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark L'Esperance', written in a cursive style.

Mark L'Esperance, Dean  
College of Education  
James Madison University

## Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP)

The Virginia Principal Support Program was created to be part of the solution for improving principal leadership. James Madison University, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and the VDOE Office of School Quality have worked together and formed strong funding and working partnerships for educational leaders within many school divisions across the state to engage in reciprocal collaboration. The VAPSP in-service school principals from participating school divisions receive continual, customized learning opportunities that aligned with the National Professional Standards for Educational Leadership, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Principal Performance Standards, and the Profile of a Virginia Leader to promote continuous school improvement efforts within divisions and schools.

**Vision:** The VAPSP vision is to model successful professional learning, development, and support for early career principals. The VAPSP strives to help build a strong principal workforce by fostering leadership efficacy through studying best school leadership practices in safe learning environments.

**Mission:** The VAPSP mission is to provide school leaders with the opportunity to engage in a community of practice to increase:

- Intentionally designed, safe learning environments for all
- Well-being for students, faculty and staff, and the school community as a whole
- Data-directed continuous school improvement
- Effective teacher retention
- Effective principal retention

## College of Education Teaching and Learning

The VAPSP will evolve into an integral part of the overall engagement of the College of Education in teaching and learning in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This involves:

- People – early-career principals, highly-effective principals currently leading in schools across the Commonwealth, principal advisors, school and division-level educational leadership, College of Education leadership and faculty, and the Virginia Department of Education staff.
- Places – College of Education, PreK – 12 schools and classrooms, higher education, research and scholarship in the public sphere, distance learning platforms, and professional development.
- Programs – Collaborative partnerships with higher education and public school divisions across the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Policies – Nomination and selection of novice principals, recruitment and professional development of VAPSP Principal Advisors, VAPSP Core Competencies and Conceptual Framework, data collection and analysis protocols, and VAPSP program evaluation.
- Processes – VAPSP Core Competencies and Conceptual Framework, data-directed decision-making, hiring, curriculum development, budget & planning, and program implementation.

## Virginia Principal Support Program

### Research Findings on Principal Support

After two decades of intensive research on school principals and their impact on successful school outcomes, it has been determined that administrators play an even greater role than previously found. Leadership impact on student learning is second to teacher impact, thus supporting more interest in improving leadership as crucial to the successful implementation of school transformation and reform efforts (Leithwood et al., 2004). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, highly effective leadership is necessary to ensure effective instructional momentum in schools. Reports continue to affirm the fact that effective principals have a direct impact on student achievement and show this impact is stronger than previously believed. In a recent report Grissom et al. (2021) state “Principals really matter. Indeed, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership” (p. xiv).

The Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership Principal attrition, retention, and mobility (2020) study, the VDOE JLARC (2021) recommendations, and numerous principal related research reported by the Wallace Foundation (2021) served as foundational considerations when developing the leadership framework for JMU’s VAPSP.

Partnerships between school districts and Universities to strategically design deeper learning opportunities to personalize learning and leadership opportunities for principals within K-12 educational landscapes. The VAPSP customizes professional development and support for novice principals and principal advisors to improve leadership practices, increase retention, and ensure principals' self-efficacy.

# The Virginia Principals Support Program Core Competencies and Conceptual Framework



The VAPSP Core Competencies were developed in direct correlation to the National Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), Principal Performance and Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Education, and informative research. The VAPSP Core Competencies incorporate fundamental leadership concepts and skills necessary for successful school leaders to build and maximize strengths in leading:

- School vision
- Effective communication
- People development
- Organizational systems
- Instruction

## The Virginia Principal Support Program Partnerships and Participants

The Virginia Principal Support Program leverages individual and collective resources from across the Commonwealth of Virginia intentionally and purposefully to support early career principals through job-embedded professional learning. The College of Education at James Madison University and enrolled school division leaders set up collaborative partnerships. A lead VAPSP contact, who is appointed per school division, manages program implementation efforts. Table 1 below shows the various roles and responsibilities of each contributor involved in the VAPSP support network. Division leaders are essential for ensuring that principal advisors and early career principals are successful in the program.

Table 1

<b>The Virginia Principal Support Program</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	
College of Education, JMU and VDOE VAPSP Initiative Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes partnership agreements with participating school divisions</li> <li>• Provides VAPSP Principal Supervisors networking support</li> <li>• Engages in program development and customization with division leaders</li> <li>• Organizes and facilitates VAPSP training and professional learning opportunities to enrolled participants</li> <li>• Communicates program information promptly to all stakeholders</li> </ul>	
<b>VAPSP School Division Partner</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	
Partner with the VAPSP to support Early Career Principals and Principal Advisors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commits to all participants' active engagement in the VAPSP activities and scheduled events throughout the program year</li> <li>• Appoints a VAPSP Principal Supervisor to fill the role as lead contact and division program coordinator</li> </ul>	
<b>VAPSP Principal Supervisor</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Required Qualifications</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Principal Supervisor (PS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervises division principals</li> <li>• Oversees professional development of school leaders</li> <li>• Designated as the VAPSP lead by division superintendent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions as lead contact for VAPSP</li> <li>• Attends and actively engages in VAPSP events and meetings as scheduled</li> <li>• Recruits and nominates division Early Career Principals (ECP)(year 1- 3)</li> <li>• Recruits and nominates division principal advisors to pair with ECPs</li> <li>• Provides relevant division documents (e.g., strategic plans, school improvement plans, professional development plans, etc.) to the Principal Advisor (PA) matched to division principal(s).</li> <li>• Supports PA and Principal (P) professional development efforts.</li> <li>• Communicates proactively with all VAPSP stakeholders</li> <li>• Supports VAPSP implementation efforts</li> <li>• Completes required VAPSP data collection activities on/or before deadlines provided</li> </ul>

## VAPSP Principal Advisor

Role	Required Qualifications	Responsibilities
<p><b>Principal Advisor (PA)</b></p>	<p><b>Professional qualities and characteristics include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values equity and developing culturally responsive systems</li> <li>• Seeks to grow self-awareness, social awareness, relationship building, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills</li> <li>• Demonstrates a growth mindset</li> <li>• Practices solution-oriented problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Practicing successful leadership strategies</li> <li>• Receives respect from peers</li> <li>• Practices effective and efficient time management</li> <li>• Takes initiative and follows through on tasks</li> <li>• Values building leadership ability in others</li> <li>• Honors confidentiality</li> </ul> <p><b>Effective interpersonal communication includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attentive, respectful listener</li> <li>• Positive, sensitive, open and honest, communicator</li> <li>• Conflict resolution and problem solver</li> <li>• Reflective practitioner</li> <li>• Strategic organizer who is successful with school improvement planning efforts</li> <li>• Proactive planner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers NON-EVALUATIVE Early Career Principal (ECP) aligned with VAPSP guidelines throughout program year</li> <li>• Connects and communicates weekly with assigned principal a <i>minimum</i> of 6 hours per month</li> <li>• Complete monthly VAPSP Advising Logs</li> <li>• Attends and actively engages in all VAPSP Professional Learning and Development events as scheduled</li> <li>• Works to build trusting, honest, and safe relationships with assigned principal</li> <li>• Communicates proactively with the principal's division supervisor to receive clarification on division specific strategic goals to best align advisement efforts</li> <li>• Establishes effective communication preferences with matched principals</li> <li>• Provides advisement and guidance to the VAPSP principal to improve leadership efficacy</li> <li>• Completes required VAPSP data collection forms, surveys and event registrations on or before deadlines</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Effectual practice includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds a current, active school principal position</li> <li>• Demonstrates proficiency or better regarding PSEL leadership standards</li> <li>• Has 4 or more years of successful school principal experience shown by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PSEL Standards</li> <li>○ VDOE School Leader Evaluations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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**VAPSP Early Career Principal**

Role	Required Qualifications	Responsibilities
<b>Early Career Principal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current, active school principal serving in a first- or second-year position within the division</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends and actively takes part in all VAPSP professional learning events as scheduled.</li> <li>• Connects and communicates with assigned VAPSP Principal Advisor (PA) a minimum of 6 hours per month</li> <li>• Works to build trusting, honest, and safe relationships with the VAPSP PA.</li> <li>• Communicates proactively with assigned PA to receive clarifications, assistance, and support as needed</li> <li>• Establishes effective communication with PA to achieve successful interactions</li> <li>• Completes required VAPSP data collection forms, surveys and event registrations on or before deadlines</li> </ul>

**Virginia Principal Support Program Contact Information**

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