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REGION 12  
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# Implementing with Fidelity and Impact: An Evaluation of the Missouri Leadership Development System

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## Summary of the Study and Findings

The Region 12 Comprehensive Center (R12CC), funded under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, conducted this evaluation of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS). The purpose of the study is to support the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in learning from educators about the implementation of MLDS across the state. The evaluation focuses on MLDS implementation during the 2020–21 school year and, building on the 2019 and 2020 formative reports, gauges changes in perceptions over time. From 2018–19 to 2020–21, principals and superintendents continuously believe the program is being implemented with fidelity and effectively develops and supports school leaders.

## Introduction and Context

The primary purpose of MLDS is “to develop and support effective school leaders” across the state (DESE, 2019b, p. 2). MLDS is aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders as developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. The key components in the MLDS organizational structure include governance, design, and implementation (see Appendix A).

In 2020–21, MLDS supported the professional growth of 1,067 school leaders. The 1,026 participants, for whom detailed information is available, included 535 principals (52%), 401 assistant principals (39%), and 90 other educators (9%) from 827 schools in 334 local education agencies (LEAs).<sup>1</sup>

MLDS supports principals at four levels in their careers, from Aspiring (pre-certificated), to Emerging (initial career entry), through Developing (practicing), and ultimately to the Transformational Principal. The program provides three layers of training and support: leadership content learning, implementation support through mentors and specialists, and regional and state networking (see Appendices A and B).

**Literature Review.** The design and implementation of MLDS is firmly rooted in research. Studies consistently show that effective principal leadership improves student learning outcomes (Branch et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2019; Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010; Nunnery et al., 2011). Given the vital role that principals play in school success, Levin and Bradley (2019) find inadequate professional development is a main reason principals leave their job. Additional studies show leadership development and support programs akin to MLDS improve principal retention and student learning (Gates et al., 2019; Jacob et al., 2015).

The remainder of this report describes the research questions and evaluation methodology, discusses findings and key issues, and presents recommendations. Tables and figures are included in the appendices.

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<sup>1</sup> Raw data were shared via email correspondence from state officials. R12CC conducted the calculations. The number of schools was identified by the number of unique school building names, and the number of LEAs by the number of unique county district codes.

## Research Questions

The study focuses on the following overarching research questions (RQs). Each question has a number of sub-questions. The findings of the study are organized by sub-question.

- » RQ1: From 2018–19 to 2020–21, what are the perceptions of principals and superintendents on MLDS (e.g., overall perceptions, fidelity of implementation, impacts of MLDS)?
- » RQ2: In 2020–21, what are principals’ and superintendents’ perceptions of MLDS micro-credentials and the support MLDS provides to principals?
- » RQ3: In 2020–21, how do principals’ perceptions of MLDS differ by RPDC<sup>2</sup> and by years of experience with the program?
- » RQ4: In 2020–21, what factors are enhancing the implementation of MLDS and what issues are (re)emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- » RQ5: In 2020–21, how do classroom teachers perceive the value and impact of their principals’ participation in MLDS?

## Methodology

For this evaluation, R12CC used a mixed-methods approach by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The multiple sources of data, collected from June to October 2021, include (a) statewide surveys of MLDS principals,<sup>3</sup> superintendents, and specialists; (b) survey of classroom teachers at ten schools in four districts; (c) interviews with MLDS principals,<sup>4</sup> superintendents, and specialists; (d) fall 2020 participant satisfaction survey administered by DESE; and (e) a review of MLDS documents.

**Principal, Superintendent, and Specialist Surveys.** R12CC, in partnership with DESE, developed and administered three web-based, anonymous surveys for all MLDS principals, superintendents, and specialists. The surveys were launched on June 10 and closed on July 2, 2021. The principal survey included 41 Likert-scale questions (e.g., overall perceptions, fidelity of implementation, impacts of MLDS), and six open-ended questions (e.g., unique features of MLDS, support from MLDS in 2020–21). The superintendent and specialist surveys included a similar set of Likert-scale and open-ended questions (see Table 1 for the response rates of the three surveys).

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<sup>2</sup> Across the state of Missouri, there are ten Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs). Established by DESE, RPDCs are designed to serve the professional development needs of public school teachers and leaders in each region. A district may choose to utilize services from any RPDC. RPDCs are supported by MLDS specialists. The 2020–21 data file, shared via email correspondence from state officials, listed the Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) as a new RPDC.

<sup>3</sup> To minimize the time demand for school leaders, MLDS principals at CSI (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) schools were invited instead to participate in a CSI survey for principals.

<sup>4</sup> To minimize the time demand for school leaders, select MLDS principals at CSI schools were invited to participate in CSI principal interviews.

As the responses of participants to the principal survey are very similar across the four MLDS-defined career levels, their responses are grouped together. In discussions of the survey responses that follow, unless otherwise noted, “principals” refer to current MLDS participants at all four levels, and “superintendents” refer to MLDS superintendents.<sup>5</sup>

The survey analyses included cross tabulations and figures to display findings. R12CC conducted Mann-Whitney U tests to examine the statistical significance of differences across groups. For the written comments, R12CC conducted thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes and key issues across survey respondents.

**Classroom Teacher Survey.** The purpose of this survey is to provide a snapshot of how MLDS is growing principals’ instructional leadership in ways that connect with teachers and improve classroom instruction. To minimize the time demand for teachers, and to enable the collection of quality data, the survey was made available to teachers at ten schools in four districts across four RPDC regions, identified jointly by DESE, MLDS specialists, and R12CC (see Table 2). The survey was launched on June 10 and closed on October 15, 2021. The survey window was extended several times to increase the response rate of teachers. It included 30 Likert-scale questions and three open-ended questions. A total of 78 classroom teachers from six schools in three districts responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 21.7%. As the perceptions of teachers are similar, their responses are grouped together. The approaches for the administration and analysis of the classroom teacher survey were the same as those used on the statewide surveys.

**Interviews.** R12CC randomly selected five principals (three selected and two alternates) at different MLDS career levels from each RPDC region, and five superintendents (three selected and two alternates) for interviews. R12CC also randomly chose five MLDS specialists. R12CC conducted 35 interviews, including 11 superintendents, 19 principals, and five specialists (see Table 3). R12CC conducted thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes and key issues across interviewee groups.

**Participant Satisfaction Survey.** R12CC examined the responses to the satisfaction survey which DESE administered in fall 2020 to MLDS participants. The survey included ten Likert-scale questions and four open-ended questions.<sup>6</sup>

**Documents Review.** R12CC reviewed multiple documents related to MLDS. Representative examples include the guides for MLDS participants at all four levels, MLDS executive summary, and administrative memos (e.g., MLDS micro-credentials).

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<sup>5</sup> This report focuses on the responses of current MLDS principals and superintendents (i.e., principals receiving MLDS training and support and their respective superintendents). Tables 10 and 11 provide the responses of previous MLDS participants (i.e., those who have participated in the MLDS program). Responses from specialists are not reported separately due to the small number of respondents (N=7). Overall, specialists are highly positive about the program.

<sup>6</sup> Responses to the fall 2020 participant satisfaction survey, administered by DESE, are highly consistent with those to the statewide principal survey conducted by R12CC.

**Limitations of the Study.** This evaluation is based primarily on perceptual data from MLDS principals and superintendents. Because the MLDS evaluation surveys across the three years have been anonymous, it is not possible to track educator responses over time. Therefore, the survey data are not strictly longitudinal and the changes observed can be due to different groups of respondents in different years. Also, due to COVID-19, the number of interviews conducted was smaller than planned and only a limited number of classroom teachers participated in the survey.

Despite these limitations, data show consistent trends on MLDS. Findings of this study contribute to DESE’s continued endeavors to make evidence-based policy refinements to the program and develop and support effective school leaders in every school in the state of Missouri.

## Findings

### RQ1-A: Overall Perceptions of MLDS

**Principals and superintendents across the years believe that the purpose of MLDS is clear and that they are well-informed about the program. They also see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.**

As Figure 1 shows, almost all principals (97–98%) indicate that the purpose of MLDS is clear, they know where to get information about the program (96–97%), and they receive information about MLDS on a regular basis (94–97%). In addition, principals (96–97%) see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning. Approximately eight out of ten superintendents share these perspectives (see Figure 2).



*“MLDS lays a great foundation to really wrap around the importance of instructional leadership.”*

-Superintendent

*A lot of the principals that I work with are too focused on the managerial piece and many don’t have a strong understanding of what instructional leadership means. MLDS lays a great foundation to really wrap around the importance of instructional leadership.*

-Superintendent

*MLDS has pushed what I think are highly effective strategies. I have used the feedback approach with our teachers and it has made a difference. I really appreciated the discussions around developing culture. Teachers who feel valued are more productive.*

-Principal

**Principals believe they receive support from their district and RPDC when applying learnings from MLDS. Superintendents indicate MLDS-related discussions with their principal(s) have influenced districtwide programs and practices.**

As Figures 1 and 2 show, from 2018–19 to 2020–21, nine out of ten principals agree that they receive support from their RPDC (91–93%) and their district (88–92%) in applying what they have learned from MLDS at their school, with which most superintendents concur (90–95%). In addition, surveyed (66–78%) and interviewed superintendents indicate that MLDS-related discussions with their principal(s) have influenced districtwide programs and practices.

*MLDS does an excellent job. When I have general administrator meetings about twice a month by levels, some of the principals will bring up things and ideas that they are getting from their professional development in MLDS.*

-Superintendent

## RQ1–B: Fidelity of Implementation of MLDS

### **Principals and superintendents believe MLDS is being implemented with fidelity.**

Across the years (see Figure 3), principals believe MLDS provides an appropriate level of support for building their leadership capacity (93–98%), and the MLDS methods are helpful in developing their leadership skills (93–99%). A dominant majority of principals (90–95%) report they are regularly applying what they learn from MLDS to their real-life leadership practices. In interviews, principals and superintendents reinforce these findings. They believe the delivery of the MLDS components is of high quality and as designed.

*[MLDS delivers its components as designed] very well. Our coordinator does a great job and we put what we learn to use the minute when we get back to our schools. It has been an excellent use of components from MLDS.*

-Principal

*If I put it [the extent to which MLDS delivers its components as designed] on a scale of 1 to 10, I would give it an 8 or 9. It works really well. They give us ideas we can implement immediately. It helps us build better instructional leaders.*

-Superintendent

Principals and specialists highlight a range of features (e.g., networking, peer collaboration, statewide continuity and collaboration) that they believe make MLDS unique. These characteristics, individually and collectively, contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

*MLDS has assisted me in growing my professional network. The specialist has made it a priority to be available for us and ensures that our sessions are filled with relevant and useful information and advice. There are always opportunities to discuss what we've learned with each other to see how we can directly utilize the strategies in our buildings.*

-Principal

*The curriculum is delivered through a facilitation model, which allows specialists the opportunity to bring their lived experiences into play. Statewide continuity and collaboration is also a unique piece of the system. The emphasis on adult learning theory provides maximum learning opportunities for school leaders.*

-Specialist

## RQ1-C: MLDS Professional Development

**Across the three years, principals and superintendents are consistently highly positive about the professional development that principals receive from MLDS.**

As Figure 4 shows, nearly all principals (98–100%) believe MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices. They also agree the professional development content (96–100%) and training materials (95–98%) are relevant to their needs, and MLDS trainings promote a common leadership vocabulary in the state (92–96%). In interviews, principals and superintendents reinforce these perspectives.

*We had training on research-based practices and strategies. It has all been very useful and implemented in the building.*

-Principal

*The materials that I receive are of high quality. My principals find the materials useful and relevant.*

-Superintendent

Data from both survey responses (95–98%) and interviews indicate principals intentionally apply what they learn from MLDS to strengthen their leadership practices in their schools.

*In my MLDS meeting, there was discussion on common planning. Someone in the group had piloted elementary common planning format so I wasted no time and adapted it to my school. We now have the school with common planning with a common language tied to data for review and discussion of student needs and planned intervention.*

-Principal

*I apply what I learn in my building in a variety of operations, culture, and instruction.*

-Principal

Previous studies (Slotnik & Liang, 2019; Liang & Slotnik, 2020) have identified networking as a key and effective feature of MLDS. Due to COVID-19, more of the networking was remote in both 2019–20 and 2020–21. In this context, the percentage of principals who agree they network with other principals remains at a high level but decreases from 94% in 2018–19 to, in the years affected by the pandemic, 92% in 2019–20, and then to 84% in 2020–21.

## RQ1-D: Importance of MLDS Components

### **Principals and superintendents highlight the importance of MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices and improving student learning.**

MLDS focuses on 32 essential competencies of a transformational principal, embedded in learning experiences for every program level (DESE, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019a). Each learning experience includes a number of treatments—specific activities and approaches—designed to foster mastery of the competencies. Collectively, these competencies, learning experiences, and treatments are referred to as MLDS components in this report.

In 2020–21, approximately nine out of ten principals rate the competencies (88%), learning experiences (96%), and treatments (88%) as extremely important or very important (see Table 4). This finding is consistent with the previous studies (Slotnik & Liang, 2019; Liang & Slotnik, 2020). In interviews, principals and superintendents reinforce these perspectives.

*I really love the treatments about culture, climate, relationship building. Through my lens, that drives everything. The treatments do really well to align to that and that ultimately equates to stronger academic performance.*

-Superintendent

*The competencies are important and serve as our guiding principles. We depend on the competencies to provide structure, especially for new principals. Competencies are almost like guideposts for me as I learn.*

-Principal

## RQ1-E: Benefits and Value of MLDS

### **From 2018–19 to 2020–21, principals and superintendents have very positive perceptions of the benefits and value of MLDS.**

As Figure 5 shows, principals believe MLDS provides principals with opportunities for professional growth (96–99%) and promotes peer collaboration (94–98%). Principals also agree MLDS strengthens their instructional leadership practices (95–98%) and makes them better school leaders (95–97%). Consistent with principals' perceptions, most superintendents (86–98%) agree participation in MLDS is beneficial and valuable (see Figure 6). In interviews, principals and superintendents elaborate on their highly positive perceptions of the benefits and value of MLDS.



*“One of the harder conversations at our cabinet meeting is which principal will have MLDS the following year. The informal network is already letting principals know the value added of MLDS to those participating.”*

-Superintendent

*One of the harder conversations at our cabinet meeting is which principal will have MLDS the following year. The informal network is already letting principals know the value added of MLDS to those participating. MLDS is great and it helped our principals.*

-Superintendent

*The people I have worked with have been really good. I get value from the time I invest with MLDS.*

-Principal

Figure 5 indicates the percentage of principals who agree that MLDS provides customized support to address their specific needs decreases slightly from 92% in 2018–19 to 91% in 2019–20, and then to 87% in 2020–21. COVID’s effects on the MLDS delivery system mean there has been more online capacity building than before the pandemic; there is also greater need for customized support. In interviews, principals and superintendents hope MLDS continues to solicit feedback from principals and superintendents, and further customize the support to schools and districts.

*I would like MLDS to distribute a survey to superintendents on matters related to MLDS. Superintendents can give direct feedback in a survey for our thoughts on topics that are meaningful to our districts.*

-Superintendent

*[One way MLDS can better support school leaders is to] survey and ask school leaders about their needs.*

-Principal

## RQ1-F: Multiple Impacts of MLDS

**Principals and superintendents agree MLDS contributes to improvement in principals’ instructional leadership practices, classroom instruction, and student achievement. They also believe MLDS supports the growth and retention of school leaders in Missouri. These findings are consistent across the three years.**

### MLDS, Instructional Leadership Practices, and Classroom Instruction

As Figure 7 shows, principals agree MLDS increases their ability to identify (94–96%) and describe (94–95%) different levels of quality of classroom instruction, and enhances their ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback (97–98%). The vast majority of principals (94–96%) believe MLDS helps them to support teachers to improve classroom instruction. Similarly, most superintendents (88–96%) agree and share these perspectives (see Figure 8).

*MLDS has been valuable, useful, and contributed to my leadership with the materials, practices, and networking. The participation has been enjoyable and provided great leadership professional development. I highly recommend MLDS.*

-Principal

*Our principals and assistant principals are using a much more critical lens as they engage in the walk-throughs. Their lens is different as a result of MLDS. It has become a part of how you lean into what is happening instructionally.*

-Superintendent

Principals and superintendents also credit MLDS with improving the climate and culture of schools, enhancing the satisfaction and retention of teachers, and changing the mindset of principals.

*My data can prove that. My school is getting much better year over year. Combining my leadership, with MLDS, for multiple years I have not had to hire teachers. The climate is great and teachers' staying is a testament to that. This is driven in large part by MLDS.*

-Principal

*I've done observations but we now have a technique that goes deeper. A teacher came to me after my feedback. She said she realized she'd been allowed under previous administrations to be lazy and she appreciated the feedback I gave. She resolved to push herself more. I thought that was impactful.*

-Principal

*I focused on change in conversations. We've moved from a mindset of management to one that is about leadership and how we get better. Hearing principals talk about it has been valuable. They comment that they like MLDS and the supports that come with it.*

-Superintendent

## MLDS and Student Achievement

As Figure 9 shows, principals (90–93%) consistently believe MLDS contributes to improved student achievement at their school. Approximately three-fourths of superintendents (73–80%) also agree (see Figure 10). In interviews, principals elaborate on MLDS' contribution to student learning.

*MLDS has helped us to develop a focus on instructional practices which directly impacts student learning. We are using tools that allow us to target our interventions for particular groups of students. We saw significant growth this year, sometimes as much as a year and a half for particular students and even more for some.*

-Principal

*The more you impact the teachers, the more you impact the students. Coaching conversations have been incredibly positive and focused on student engagement. Instructional improvement has come around.*

-Principal

## MLDS and School Leader Growth and Retention

Nearly all principals (96–98%) agree MLDS supports the growth of school leaders in the state (see Figure 9). In addition, **nine out of ten principals (88–92%) believe MLDS makes them more likely to stay as school leaders in Missouri.** The majority of superintendents also agree MLDS supports the growth (95–96%) and retention (80–88%) of school leaders (see Figure 10). In interviews, principals and superintendents indicate MLDS helps to make principals feel supported and valued, which contributes to the retention of effective school leaders.

*I think MLDS would have a significant impact on retention because if people feel valued, they tend to stay.*

-Principal

*MLDS helps in retention because it helps principals feel supported. When they feel supported, they tend to feel valued. When people feel valued, they stay longer.*

-Superintendent

DESE's analysis of the 2019–20 data shows the retention rate for MLDS principals (98%) is notably higher than the state's overall principal retention rate (84%), and this is true for all RPDC regions (DESE, n.d.-a). This finding, consistent with those reported in Slotnik and Liang (2019) and Liang and Slotnik (2020), suggests MLDS helps to retain school leaders.

## RQ2-A: MLDS Micro-Credentials

In 2020–21, micro-credentials become part of MLDS. Approved by the Missouri State Board of Education, MLDS micro-credentials provide principals with an additional path to demonstrate their mastery of critical leadership skills and upgrade their administrator certificate (DESE, 2021). Effective September 1, 2021, principals completing three MLDS micro-credentials can upgrade from an initial administrator certificate to a transition administrator certificate, and to a career continuous administrator certificate by completing fifteen micro-credentials (DESE, n.d.-c).

**Principals and superintendents are generally aware that principals can upgrade their administrator certificate by completing MLDS micro-credentials. They believe completing micro-credentials helps to improve principals' leadership practices.**

As Figure 11 shows, at the time of data collection, two-thirds of principals (63%) and three-fourths of superintendents (77%) indicate they are aware that principals can upgrade their administrator certificate by completing micro-credentials. Three-fourths of principals (74%) and superintendents (75%) believe completing micro-credentials helps to improve principals' leadership practices. In interviews, superintendents and principals elaborate on their positive perceptions.

*I am aware of the MLDS micro-credential. It is a good way to improve young administrators' craft by adding practical experience and maintain certification.*

-Superintendent

*I think it could have an impact, even if it just helps someone who is an administrator to be able to know their worth and value. Micro-credentials can help you with that and show tangibly things have accomplished.*

-Principal

Some principal interviewees indicate, however, they have limited time for micro-credentials. This is mostly due to the competing priorities and challenges from COVID-19 and other involvements.

*We touched on this but I didn't go into depth. Too much is going on this year.*

-Principal

*Yes, I am of aware of the upgrade to administrator certificate with micro-credentials. I have not started one because I am completing university courses for the administrative specialist certificate. I think the MLDS micro-credential may be useful but my course work at this time is more relevant.*

-Principal

## RQ2-B: The Support from MLDS to Principals in 2020–21

**Even amidst the continuing pandemic, principals and superintendents think highly of the support which MLDS provides to principals.**

As Figure 12 shows, more than eight out of ten principals indicate that despite the pandemic, MLDS helps them to address the social and emotional needs of students and teachers (83%). Principals also agree MLDS supports them to remain focused on instruction and student learning (90%), and assists them in helping teachers and students to advance learning within different environments (81%). In interviews, principals and superintendents highlight the support from MLDS to address the social and emotional needs of students and teachers.



*“We were encouraged by MLDS not to use COVID as an excuse but to think beyond that.”*

-Principal

*The social and emotional needs are addressed in culture and other topics at every meeting. We are given ideas as we check up on our kids and staff.*

-Principal

*I think that is something they have done a good job at. In fact, that kind of support was very helpful. One of my principals came back with resources on social and emotional support. It helped us provide support to students who would not have gotten it otherwise.*

-Superintendent

Principals and superintendents particularly value the MLDS support to principals which focuses on the instructional and learning needs of teachers and students.

*I am so thankful that MLDS did not focus on COVID-19 in all our trainings. There were important check-ins, but our training was focused on our job and work in our buildings. The fact that they stayed focused on what was important kept us focused on what was important and how to prioritize what we needed to do as leaders.*

-Principal

*We were encouraged by MLDS not to use COVID as an excuse but to think beyond that. We are challenged to apply our learnings from MLDS despite COVID.*

-Principal

*Administrators didn't meet face-to-face due to restrictions, but the communication was still there. MLDS had larger Zoom meetings and the sessions continued. So that was key to me. Regardless of COVID, we were focused on our kids and parents.*

-Superintendent

Principals agree that in 2020–21, MLDS continues to provide relevant and applicable learning activities (86%) with flexible virtual learnings and a hybrid of training formats (86%). MLDS also disseminates on a regular basis research-based practices and strategies (88%). In interviews, principals elaborate on their positive perceptions.

*As a principal weathering the perfect storm of the COVID pandemic, being able to network with peers in the same situation was one of the most valuable and effective parts of MLDS. When we were actually able to meet face-to-face and have broad discussions of things in our buildings, it provided me with so much insight and reassurance.*

-Principal

*Everything is research-based. The practices and strategies are useful, relevant, and timely. Things we are trained on can be implemented immediately. Most have to do with instructional practices and observations.*

-Principal

Figure 13 shows superintendents (70–89%) largely share the perspectives of the principals regarding the support from MLDS in 2020–21.

## RQ3-A: Perceptions of Principals by RPDC Region

**Principals in all RPDC regions are highly positive about MLDS. The responses of principals in the South Central region are the most positive.**

Pairwise comparisons, reflected in Table 5, show principals in the South Central region form one group, and principals in the other regions essentially form a second group. This finding is consistent with Slotnik and Liang (2019) and Liang and Slotnik (2020). Principals in the South Central region also place higher levels of importance on the MLDS components (see Table 6).

Responses to some survey items help to explain the perceptions of the two groupings of principals. Although principals in all RPDC regions are highly positive about MLDS, higher percentages of principals in the South Central region than their peers in other RPDCs strongly agree the purpose of MLDS is clear (82% vs. 61%), they receive support from their RPDC in applying their MLDS learnings (80% vs. 49%), and the professional development content is relevant (85% vs. 56%). Higher percentages of principals in the South Central region also strongly agree the MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like theirs (87% vs. 59%), help them to apply the content to practical situations (85% vs. 59%), and effectively support them (84% vs. 59%).

## RQ3-B: Principals' Perceptions by Years of Experience with MLDS

**The longer principals participate in MLDS, the more positive they are about the implementation and impact of the program.**

As Table 7 shows, principals across their years of experience with MLDS all think highly of the program. The longer they participate in the program, the more positive their perceptions are. For example, although nearly all principals across their years of experience (96–100%) strongly agree or agree they receive information about MLDS on a regular basis, the percentage of principals who strongly agree with the survey item improves steadily as principals' years of experience in MLDS increases (47% for one year, 62% for two years, 70% for three years, 97% for four or more years). Principals having more years of experience with MLDS also place higher levels of importance on the MLDS components (see Table 8).

## RQ4-A: Enhancing Factors

**Principals and superintendents continue to highlight multiple factors contributing to the effectiveness of MLDS: networking and collaboration; hands-on and relevant learning experiences; statewide consistency and regional flexibility; focus on instruction; and research-based strategies.**

In interviews and survey comments, principals and superintendents highlight the factors that they previously identified (Slotnik & Liang, 2019; Liang & Slotnik, 2020) as making the program effective and impactful. They indicate that networking and collaboration with professional



*"MLDS lets us know that we were not alone...We had a collective resilience!"*

-Principal

colleagues provides opportunities for sharing best practices and building a collective resilience during the pandemic. They also highly value the hands-on and authentic learning experiences which improve their leadership craft, and the statewide implementation of MLDS which results in a common language amongst school leaders. They also believe the focus on instruction and research-based strategies makes the program impactful.

*MLDS lets us know that we were not alone! The discourse among the mentor, my colleagues, and myself was invaluable. We had a collective resilience!*

-Principal

*The enhancements are: statewide program; going the same direction with the same issues. It is streamlined and at the state meetings you realize that you are not alone. The program gives you a wider lens and scope.*

-Principal

*Benefits of reflection, informality of the network, are so powerful. I believe MLDS keeps people in the profession and to be in a space mentally and emotionally where they can continue to grow.*

-Superintendent

**The support from mentors and specialists is invaluable.** As Figure 14 shows, nearly all principals agree mentors and specialists effectively support them in their leadership role (94–99%) and understand schools like theirs (93–96%). Principals also indicate mentors and specialists help them to apply the content of MLDS to practical situations (96–98%).

*It has been a stressful year, but MLDS mentors and specialists check up on us. They ask about the students and staff. They share best practices from experience or from observations of other school leaders that are effective.*

-Principal

*The specialist and mentor check in with me from time to time. They are very approachable, effective, and very responsive and well organized.*

-Superintendent

Principals strongly believe the continued support from mentors and specialists contributes to the effectiveness of the program.

*If it were not for MLDS mentoring, I am not sure I would have made changes to my practice as quickly as I did. I have grown as a leader because of it.*

-Principal

*Being part of MLDS helps me to understand if I am going in the right direction. I always felt free to bounce ideas off my mentor or group leader. The most helpful aspect of the program was when the mentor came to my school and participated in walk-throughs, even during the pandemic.*

-Principal

**Superintendents play a pivotal role in supporting principals' participation in MLDS. When superintendents have personal experiences with the program or receive positive feedback from their principals, they are more likely to appreciate the program's value and benefits.**



*"My superintendent is a big player in MLDS... He places value on what I am learning."*

-Principal

Interview data highlight the pivotal role that superintendents play when supporting principals to participate in and benefit from MLDS.

*My superintendent is a big player in MLDS and, as soon as I come back, he asks me about what I've learned and how I'll apply it in my school. He places value on what I am learning. He always schedules time to debrief with me after the meeting. It makes me feel that what I do as a new principal is just as important as a new superintendent.*

-Principal

*Our expectations of MLDS are high. It's a combination of principals who need the work, the superintendents who support the work, and the mentor. All of us want to see success because it's for every kid in our area.*

-Superintendent

*I made a strong commitment to assign principals, new and some who needed extra leadership support, to MLDS. I wanted them to have a common language and connect with other school leaders.*

-Superintendent

When superintendents, themselves, have gone through the program or receive positive feedback from their principals, they are more likely to see the program as valuable and beneficial.

*The sharing of ideas and encouragement through the virtual format has sustained my principals more than I can quantify. I saw their responses to emails and other forms of communication. They are so grateful for the effort spent on them. It fostered my resolve to not only include more principals in this but, more importantly, to see the long term effects of this when they do have the time to dig deeper into their own reflective practices.*

-Superintendent

*I actually went through MLDS as a principal. MLDS gives younger administrators, like the ones in my district, guidance on difficult situations. The networking piece helps them to bounce off ideas from each other. Their learning experiences have been extremely beneficial. I always took something away from the MLDS meetings.*

-Superintendent

A few superintendents indicate there is need for stronger two-way communication between MLDS and districts. They believe that increasing the joint effort to better understand the needs of the principals would enhance the capacity of both MLDS and districts to provide more effective support to principals.

*I would like more communication from MLDS about what we could do in the district that would be beneficial to us. For example, if the MLDS staff notice a particular challenge in my participants, could they recommend opportunities or experiences that the district should make available to the leader to augment the MLDS program offerings? So communication is a two-way street. First, MLDS should let the district know what they have learned about the individual so that the district can support the leader growing in those areas. And secondly, the district should be able to offer their insight on that individual and request support in particular areas.*

-Superintendent

*There is minimal, if any communication, between the MLDS system and the school district regarding the specific participants, what they are learning, areas of need, how the district can support the principal, etc.*

-Superintendent

## RQ4-B: Emerging Issues during COVID-19

Principals, superintendents, and specialists share a few common concerns. Some of the issues are related to the pandemic, while some others are similar to those reported in the 2019 and 2020 studies. By examining these concerns, the state can be better positioned and continue to support school leaders during the pandemic.

**Interviewees feel some districts and their leaders are less invested in the program. They believe there should be more conversations and stronger connections between principals and their superintendents, and between superintendents and MLDS.**

*How do we get more district level leaders to invest in the program and support the program by making their administrators go through it? The important piece is dialoguing and talking it through; the key that is missing is how we get more district level leaders to engage in conversations with their building leaders about what they are learning.*

-Superintendent

*[Parts of MLDS that are impeding its effectiveness include] non-participation with area superintendents to support school leaders to attend.*

-Specialist

Principals also hope MLDS can get superintendents more involved in the program so that principals can be better supported by the districts.

*Maybe get superintendents involved to oversee MLDS improvements in the districts. Give specific support to upper administration.*

-Principal



*“We need to get districts to realize how MLDS benefits everyone.”*

-Principal

*It is difficult for MLDS to get people to be mentors because a lot of districts don't support it. Many districts have guidelines about the number of days an administrator can be out of building. We need to get districts to realize how MLDS benefits everyone, whether they are an administrator going through the program or someone who wants to be a mentor.*

-Principal

Principals recommend MLDS put more effort in promoting the program.

*From my perspective, having multiple administrators saying that the training is positive is a key. Honestly, I don't think MLDS is well-known. It needs to be discussed and spread more broadly. People just do not know about it.*

-Principal

*Get the word out. Push the message. MLDS is just not well-known.*

-Principal

**Principals indicate the virtual meetings and trainings, necessitated by COVID-19, are going well. However, they feel there are fewer opportunities for in-person meetings, onsite observations, and face-to-face networking, all of which are highly valued by principals.**

In response to the pandemic, MLDS is anticipatory in moving many learning opportunities to a virtual format. Many principals like the flexibility in scheduling. For those who serve as the only administrator in smaller schools, they particularly appreciate not having to be away from their building. Some other principals, who prefer face-to-face networking and collaboration in real-life learning activities, feel they are less connected and the learnings are less effective.

*MLDS virtual meetings went well. I liked it because I don't like to be out of my building. The meetings went further to maximize the time we use and minimize the waste.*

-Principal

*With COVID, there were limitations. Before COVID, we visited an elementary school, to observe and practice the 30 second feedback to teachers. During COVID, we received emails from the specialists, tidbits, videos, and face-to-face a couple of times.*

-Principal

Interviews and survey responses show the following issues, reported previously (Slotnik & Liang, 2019; Liang & Slotnik, 2020), are re-emerging as areas for improvement.

Across the years, data highlight the mentoring component of MLDS as a salient factor contributing to the effectiveness of the program. In this context, **a few principals and superintendents indicate there should be more clarity on the expectations for mentors.**

*MLDS directors could convene an extra meeting with mentors together before the trainings about their role and expectations in break-outs then push together. Give feedback to mentors sometime during the year on the job they are doing; reassuring mentors that they are doing their best.*

-Principal

*The mentoring piece depends on the mentor. The MLDS specialist should touch base with the leaders to engage in who will serve as their mentor. It's happened that I think there hasn't always been the best fit. It all depends.*

-Superintendent

**Principals indicate MLDS is most impactful when the support is sufficiently differentiated to local contexts and individual needs.** They continue to express a strong desire for further differentiation of MLDS support to better accommodate the nuanced differences among principals and schools. Meanwhile, specialists still have concerns that scaling up the program makes it challenging to provide more customized assistance to a growing number of principals.

*The component that made the most significant impact is when there is a focus on the individual leaders and their buildings. It's not differentiated enough to respond to all the ways in which schools and leaders could be different.*

-Principal

*With our region being so large (hundreds of participants annually) and with only a few specialists, it is difficult to provide 1-on-1 feedback/coaching, except for years one and two when a mentor is provided for each participant.*

-Specialist

DESE is facing a challenge resulting from MLDS successes. As more principals are participating, the need for providing customized support is expanding. In response, DESE has been proactively increasing the size of the specialist team to accommodate the professional growth needs of an increasing number of principals. From 2016–17 to present, DESE has been successful in tripling the number of specialists from nine to 27 (DESE, n.d.-b).

## RQ5: A Vignette about Teachers' Perceptions of MLDS

The purpose of the classroom teacher survey is to provide a snapshot of how MLDS is growing principals' instructional leadership in ways that connect with teachers and improve classroom instruction. Seventy-eight teachers from six schools in three districts responded to the survey.

**Classroom teachers are highly positive about their principals' participation in MLDS.** As Table 9 shows, the majority of classroom teachers indicate they are aware of their principals' involvement in MLDS (76%). Three-fourths of teachers (72–74%) agree they see a connection between leadership development, classroom instruction, and student learning through their principals' participation in MLDS. Teachers also indicate their principals apply the learnings from MLDS to practical situations (75%) and to strengthen instructional leadership practices (75%). Teachers credit the improvement in their principals' instructional leadership practices, which they have observed over the years, to their principals' participation in MLDS.

*My principal takes more time to listen to the kids and adults in the building.*

-Classroom Teacher

*[My principal is] constantly studying, observing, and researching new ways to teach material in a way that meets the needs of all students.*

-Classroom Teacher

**Classroom teachers highlight the usefulness, quality, and relevance of their principals' professional development offerings.** Teachers agree the professional development they receive from the principals is useful (83%), of high quality (83%), and relevant to their work (83%). Teachers also agree the professional development focuses on research-based instructional practices (90%), strengthens teachers' instructional practices (85%), and supports teachers in meeting the learning needs of students (79%). A relatively lower percentage of teachers indicate the offerings are differentiated to their instructional learning needs (69%).

**Teachers express confidence in the evaluations conducted by their principals.** Almost all teachers (94–98%) agree their principals are capable of identifying and describing different levels of quality of classroom instruction, are qualified to conduct observations, and provide constructive feedback. Approximately four-fifths of teachers (79%) indicate that their principals use the evaluation results to inform teachers' professional development plans.

**Teachers are highly positive about the instructional leadership practices of their MLDS-trained principals.** Nine out of ten classroom teachers (89–96%) agree their principals promote teachers' reflection on instructional practices, and encourage instruction-focused dialogue and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and



*"I have no doubt that my principal's continued participation in MLDS contributes to my principal's knowledge and awareness of current best practices."*

-Classroom Teacher

school administrators. Teachers also indicate their principals support the work they do in the classroom (96%) and promote continuous learning for all teachers (87%). Teachers believe their principals have high academic expectations for all students (98%) and focus on instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (96%).

*My principal has made continued efforts to provide additional enrichment and professional development to allow for helping fill student learning gaps and continued academic growth.*

-Classroom Teacher

*My principal has been very understanding, trusting, and has made me feel valued as an educator during the pandemic.*

-Classroom Teacher

**Teachers agree their principals' participation in MLDS has a positive impact on classroom instruction, the recruitment and retention of effective teachers, and student achievement.** Two-thirds to four-fifths of classroom teachers (68–81%) agree with the survey prompts on the impact of MLDS. Teachers elaborate on these positive perceptions in survey comments.

*My principal is a very capable leader, and I have no doubt that my principal's continued participation in MLDS contributes to my principal's knowledge and awareness of current best practices.*

-Classroom Teacher

*The 2020–21 school year was the best year in education I have ever had and I strongly believe that is because of the leadership of my principal. My principal goes above and beyond the capacity and ability to understand, help, trust, and honor the building of teachers along with accountability.*

-Classroom Teacher

Teachers' perceptions of their principals' participation in MLDS mirror the beliefs of principals on MLDS (e.g., of high quality, focuses on research and instruction, impactful, in need of further differentiation). This may suggest principals are translating what they benefit from MLDS into their support to teachers. In other words, **in addition to developing and supporting effective principals, MLDS may be having a ripple effect on nurturing classroom teachers.**

## Implications and Recommendations

Despite COVID-19, principals and superintendents continue to recommend the state build on the strengths of MLDS and deepen customized services. In this context, the following issues and recommendations are intended to assist DESE in making evidence-based refinements to MLDS.

### Issue One: District Leader Involvement and Support

#### Overview

District leaders play a paramount role in supporting MLDS principals. When superintendents engage with participating principals, they tend to appreciate to a greater extent the value and benefits of MLDS. Moreover, their support encourages a larger number of principals to participate in the program. In addition, superintendents believe there should be stronger two-way communication between MLDS and districts.

#### Recommended Action

*Encourage involvement of district leaders in MLDS.* To ensure all principals across the state have the needed support from their districts, it is essential that, building on the outreach campaign currently underway, MLDS continues to encourage district leaders to get involved in the program. As an example, in order to maximize the instructional benefits of MLDS trainings, MLDS may consider inviting superintendents to attend select training sessions with principals, particularly those in topic areas considered essential for their districts.

*Strengthen two-way communication between MLDS and district leaders.* Superintendents are interested in understanding what principals learn from MLDS so that they can better support the principals at their school. They also hope MLDS can provide customized services to meet the unique needs of their schools and district. MLDS should continue to use multiple vehicles to strengthen two-way communication between the program and district leaders. The vehicles may include regular communications about MLDS trainings (e.g., content, materials used, expected impacts); ongoing feedback of principals (e.g., areas for growth, support districts can provide); and surveys or interviews with superintendents so that districts can share their perspectives on customized supports needed from MLDS for their principals.

### Issue Two: School Leaders and the COVID-19 Pandemic

#### Overview

Despite the pandemic, MLDS is successful in developing and supporting effective school leaders. A particular strength, highlighted by principals and superintendents, is keeping the focus on instruction and student learning. MLDS should therefore continue to provide principals with the supports, proven effective to-date, so they can intensify their focus on these priorities.

#### Recommended Action

*Continue to support networking among principals.* MLDS responded promptly and successfully to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to a virtual model provides principals with more opportunities

for remote networking. Over the years, the program has demonstrated it can effectively support principals with both in-person and remote networking. MLDS should engage principal participants about how they think the remote networking could become even more effective in the year ahead.

*Keep focusing on research-based practices and strategies.* Research can provide a grounding for making improvements in schools. It can also help leaders to move their school communities beyond many of the controversies that are affecting the field of public education. In this context, MLDS should consider preparing short research briefs with talking points that principals can use to help coalesce their school communities around the educational steps which their schools are taking.

*Expand efforts to promote micro-credentials among principals.* MLDS micro-credentials provide principals with another route for upgrading their administrator certificate. However, at the time of data collection, not all educators are aware of this opportunity or see the connection between micro-credentials and leadership skills. To encourage every principal in Missouri to benefit from this opportunity, MLDS should increase efforts to promote micro-credentials among principals and superintendents and help them to see the rationale and the research-base for micro-credentials.

## Issue Three: Mentors and Specialists

### Overview

Principals and superintendents highlight the pivotal role mentors and specialists play in leadership development. As MLDS scales up, it is essential to continue to build the capacity of mentors and specialists and ensure the quality and consistency of their support to principals.

### Recommended Action

*Review and further refine the mentor component.* Principals and superintendents speak highly of the support from mentors. There are still concerns, however, that a small percentage of mentors are not effectively supporting principals. MLDS should keep reviewing and refining the mentor component to deepen the common understanding among mentors of the expectations for their positions.

*Emphasize the consistency of high quality services from the specialists.* DESE successfully tripled the number of specialists from nine in 2016–17 to 27 at present. This achievement markedly enhances the specialist team’s capability to provide more customized support to meet the nuanced differences of needs of a larger number of principals. Over the years, MLDS has established the expectations for the quality of support from the specialists. As the number of specialists expands, it is crucial that MLDS emphasize the consistency of the high quality services from specialists to principals.

### Summary

Principals and superintendents across the state believe that, from 2018–19 to 2020–21, MLDS is being implemented with fidelity and effectively develops and supports school leaders. In the year ahead, by keeping the focus on instruction and student learning, MLDS will be well-positioned to support principals to lead their schools effectively as new challenges emerge.

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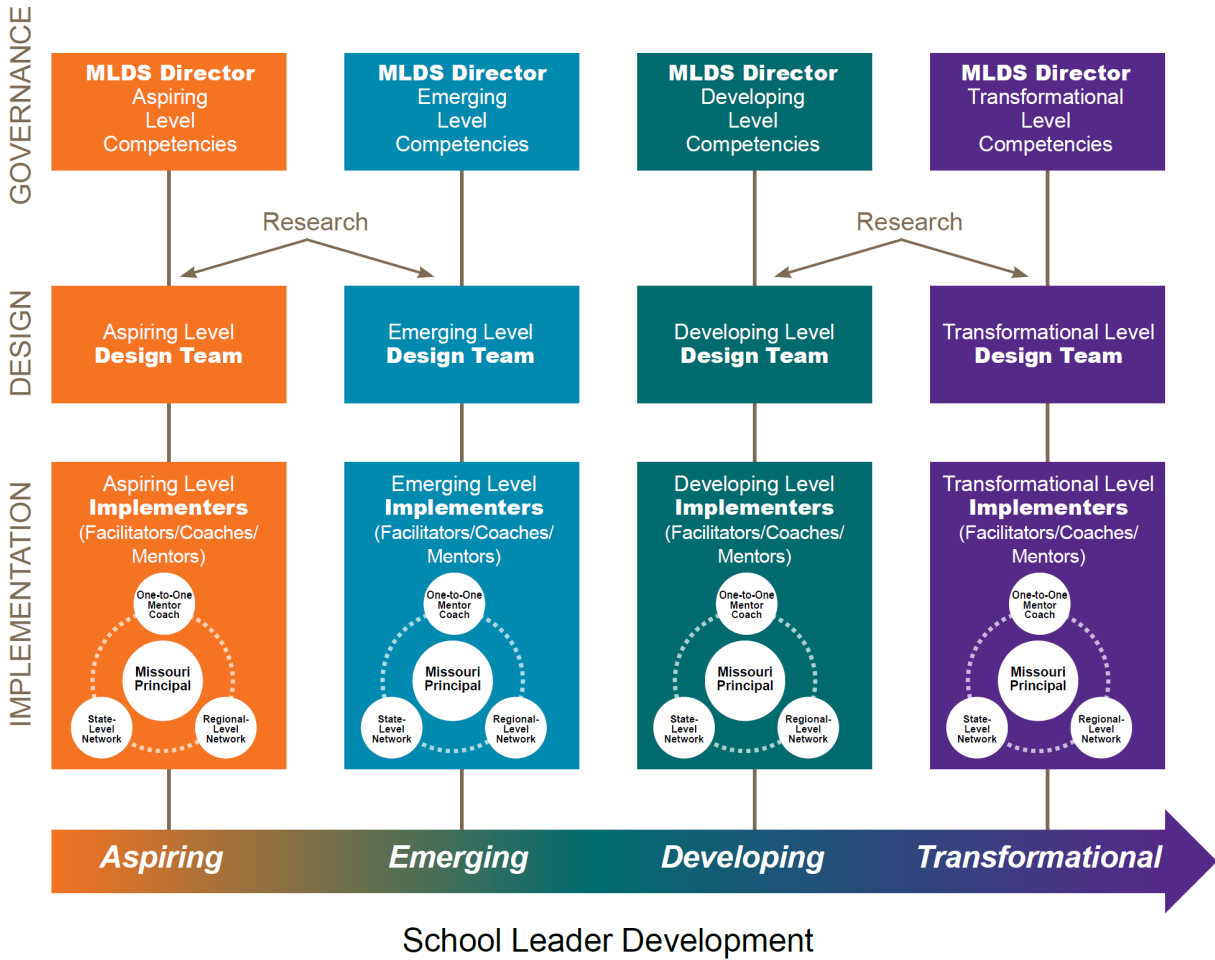
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# Appendix A: MLDS Organizational Chart

## The MLDS Commission

State Educational Agency | Education Administration Programs  
Professional Associations | Regional Service Centers



## Appendix B: MLDS Career Levels and 2-Year Implementation Calendar for Emerging Level Principals

MLDS supports principals at four levels, from Aspiring (pre-certificated), to Emerging (initial career entry), through Developing (practicing), and ultimately to the Transformational Principal.

- » *Aspiring Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators in preparing for the principalship. This preparation (pre-service) phase results in an administrative certificate. The *Aspiring Level* training became available to participants in 2019–20.
- » *Emerging Level* participants. Their learning experiences are delivered across a two-year timeline to align with the state’s requirement that beginning school leaders be mentored for their first two years. The initial years of practice result in readiness for the next phase. This training became available to participants in 2016–17.
- » *Developing Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators across a span of several years. It further develops and refines participants’ leadership skills. The training became available to participants in 2018–19.
- » *Transformational Level* participants. Their learning experiences are designed to engage administrators across a span of several years. This phase builds the necessary skills and knowledge of principals to lead schools in ways fully responsive to the learning needs of students. This training became available to participants in 2019–20.

The following graphic provides an illustration of a 2-year implementation calendar for *Emerging* level participants (DESE, 2019a).

LE 1 Critical Firsts | 
 LE 2 Excellent Instruction | 
 LE 3 Understand Self & Others | 
 LE 4 Decision Making | 
 LE 5 Shaping School Culture | 
 LE 6 Making Time

|             |                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------|----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>2016</b> | July                 | Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>  | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span> | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |
|             | Aug.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting  | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span> | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |
|             | Sept.                | Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b>  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> |  |  |  |  |  |
|             | Oct.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting<br>Connect/Extend Learning Lab             | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span> | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |
| <b>2017</b> | Nov.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>  | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |  |  |
|             | Dec.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting  | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 1</span> | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |
|             | Feb.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |
|             | Mar.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b><br>Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |
|             | May                  | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting<br>Connect/Extend Learning Lab             | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |
|             | July                 | Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>  | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |  |  |
| <b>2018</b> | Aug.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> |  |  |  |  |  |
|             | Sept.                | Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> |  |  |  |  |  |
|             | Oct.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting<br>Connect/Extend Learning Lab             | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> |  |  |  |
|             | Nov.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Learning Lab  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> |  |  |  |  |  |
|             | Jan.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Regional Meeting</b>  | <span style="background-color: #4B0082; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |  |
|             | Mar.                 | Engagement Platform <b>Online Event</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting<br>Engagement Platform <b>Learning Lab</b> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |
|             | April<br>May<br>June | Engagement Platform <b>Mentor/Coach</b> / Connect/Extend Regional Meeting  | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 2</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 3</span> | <span style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 4</span> | <span style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 5</span> | <span style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 2px;">LE 6</span> |  |

## Appendix C: Data Sources, Sample, and Methods

Table 1 shows the response rates on the three statewide surveys. The surveys were launched on June 10, 2021, using an independent platform. R12CC sent the survey links to DESE and DESE forwarded the survey links to all MLDS principals, superintendents, and specialists. The principal and superintendent associations and some specialists helped to disseminate information about the surveys. R12CC provided DESE with regular updates on survey participation. Multiple reminders were sent to maximize the number of responses. The surveys were closed on July 2, 2021.

The MLDS principal survey included a series of Likert-scale questions focusing on overall perceptions; fidelity of implementation; professional development; importance of MLDS components; benefits and value; impact of the program; and supports from MLDS in 2020–21. Six open-ended questions further explored the perceptions of principals about the unique features of MLDS, enhancing factors, impeding factors, supports from MLDS during 2020–21, supports needed from MLDS in the era of COVID-19, and recommendations for program improvement.

The questions for MLDS superintendents, whose districts have principal(s) involved in MLDS, focused on overall perceptions; benefits and value; impact of the program; and supports from MLDS in 2020–21. Four open-ended questions further explored the perceptions of superintendents about the enhancing factors, impeding factors, supports from MLDS during 2020–21, and supports needed from MLDS in the era of COVID-19.

The specialist survey included a similar set of Likert-scale and open-ended questions as the MLDS principal survey, with some wording adjustments as appropriate. All specialists surveyed are those who provide training and support through MLDS.

**Table 1. Response Rates for the Principal, Superintendent, and Specialist Surveys, 2020–21**

| Respondents   | Population | Number of Responses | Response Rate |
|---|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| MLDS Principals<br><i>Aspiring Level (Current)</i><br><i>Emerging Level (Current)</i><br><i>Developing Level (Current)</i><br><i>Transformational Level (Current)</i><br><i>Previous Participants</i> | 1,045      | 334                 | 32.0%         |
| MLDS Superintendents  | 346        | 67                  | 19.4%         |
| Specialists   | 17         | 7                   | 41.2%         |

*Note.* Responses to survey questions were not required, therefore total numbers of respondents may vary throughout this report. A total of 22 Non-MLDS principals responded to the principal survey and 13 Central Office Administrators responded to the superintendent survey, however their responses are not part of this evaluation. MLDS principals at CSI (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) schools were invited instead to participate in a CSI survey for principals. At the time of data collection, there were 17 MLDS specialists.

To examine respondents' perceptions of the fidelity of MLDS implementation, this study focuses on *Participant Responsiveness* and *Program Differentiation* (e.g., Dane & Schneider, 1998, as cited in U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2015), two dimensions of fidelity that can be

adequately captured with survey and interview data. *Participant Responsiveness* refers to the extent to which participants react to or engage in the program (e.g., perceptions about the relevance, appropriateness, and helpfulness of MLDS). *Program Differentiation* refers to the degree that the critical components of the program are distinguishable from each other and from other programs.

Table 2 shows the key criteria for the selection of districts and principals for the classroom teacher survey. DESE, MLDS specialists, and R12CC jointly identified ten schools in four districts across four RPDC regions. All classroom teachers at those ten schools were invited to participate in the classroom teacher survey. The survey was launched on June 10 and closed on October 15, 2021. A total of 78 classroom teachers (out of 360) from six schools in three districts responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 21.7%.

**Table 2. Key Criteria for the Selection of Districts and Principals for the Classroom Teacher Survey**

| Criteria for Districts  | Criteria for Principals   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Each district is located in a different region</li> <li>» Each district’s superintendent is a different person than the MLDS principal</li> <li>» At least two of the districts have two or more MLDS principals</li> <li>» Select districts with some elementary and secondary MLDS principals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Two years or more MLDS experience and currently in MLDS</li> <li>» Takes the work seriously and implements MLDS with fidelity based on specialist knowledge</li> </ul> |

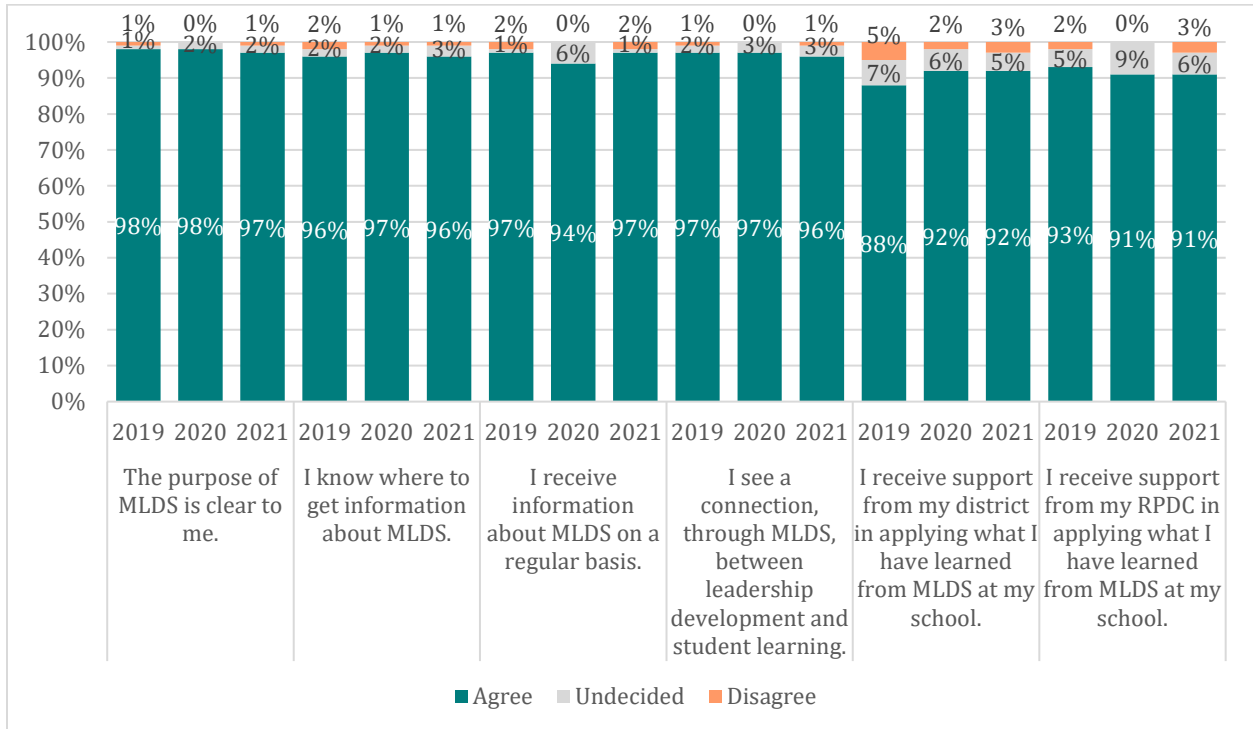
Table 3 shows the number of interviewees by position. For interviews with MLDS principals, superintendents, and specialists, R12CC developed three protocols tailored as appropriate to the role of the interviewees. The protocols included questions on the perceptions of the fidelity of MLDS implementation, professional development, and the impact of the program on leadership practices, classroom instruction, student learning, and the recruitment and retention of effective leaders. Interviewees were also asked about their perceptions of supports from MLDS during the pandemic, factors enhancing or impeding the implementation of MLDS, and recommendations for further improving the program.

**Table 3. Number of Interviewees by Position (N = 35)**

| Role            | Number of Interviewees |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Superintendents | 11                     |
| Principals      | 19                     |
| Specialists     | 5                      |

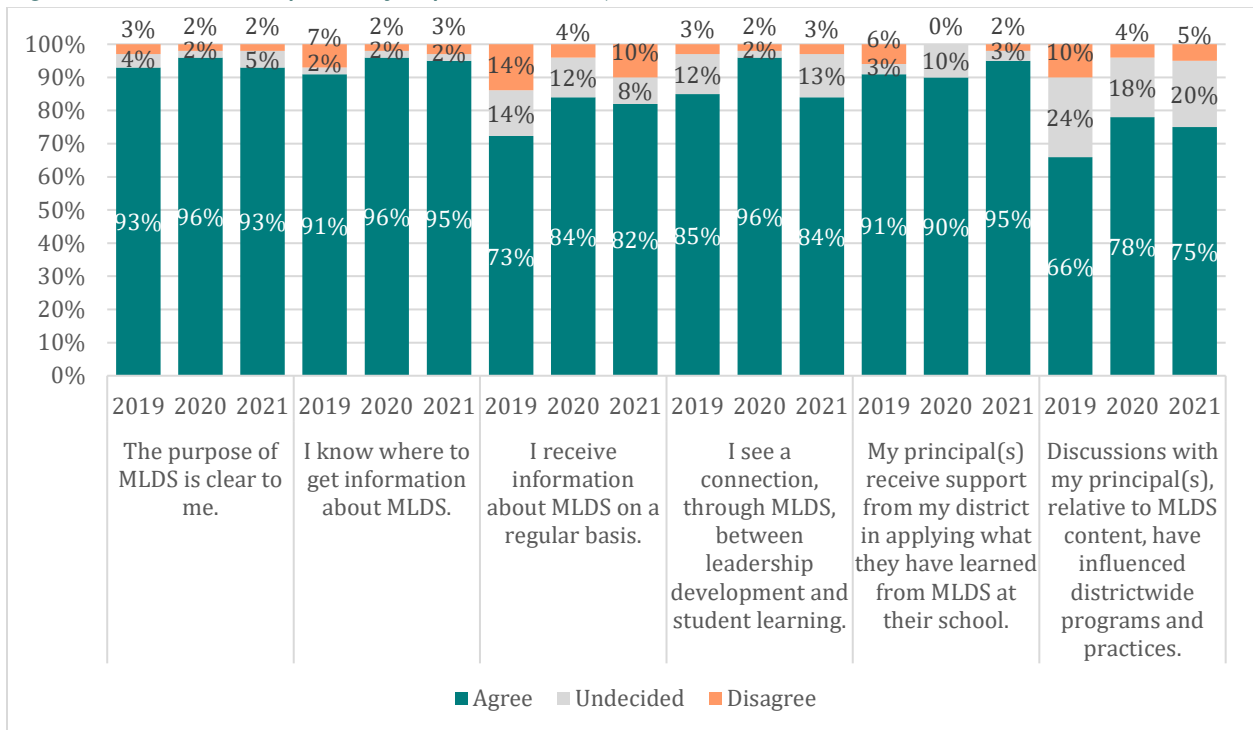
## Appendix D: Survey Results

Figure 1. Overall Perceptions of Principals, 2018–19 to 2020–21

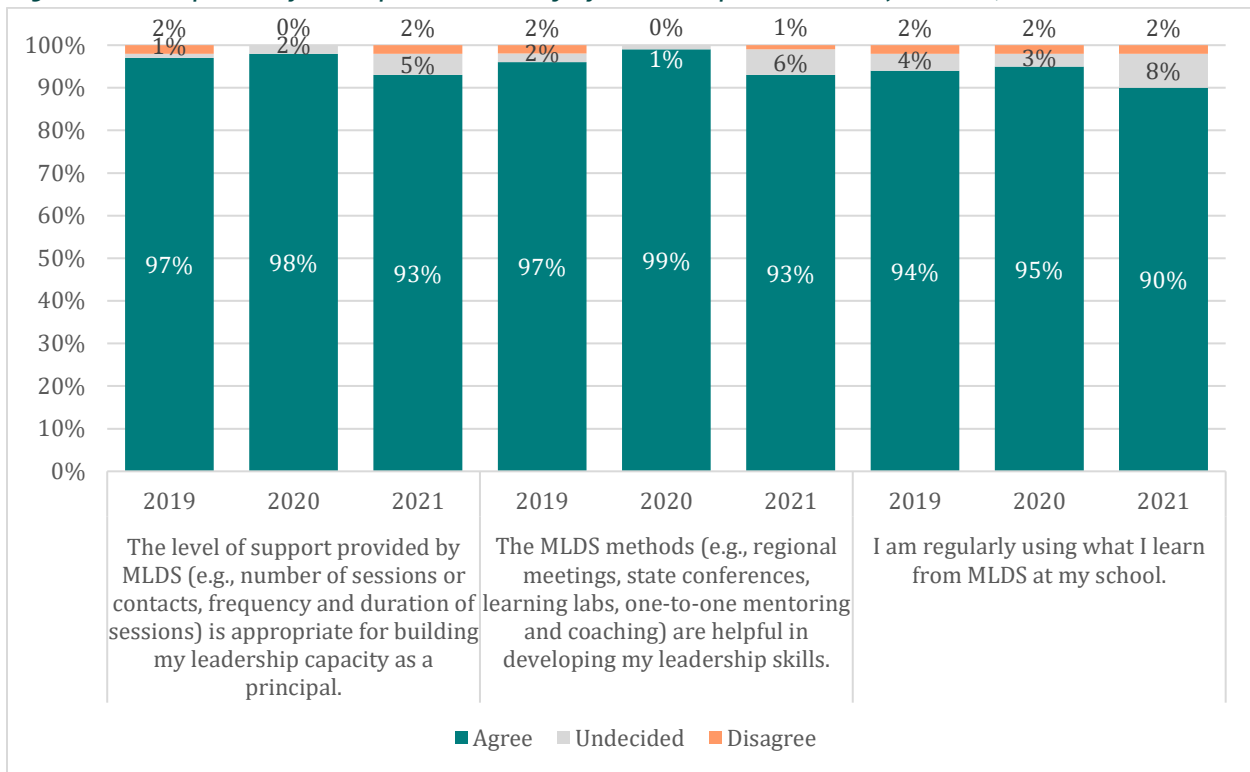


Note. Throughout this report, unless otherwise noted, agree is a composite of strongly agree/agree, and disagree is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. Due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to precisely 100%.

Figure 2. Overall Perceptions of Superintendents, 2018–19 to 2020–21



**Figure 3. Perceptions of Principals on Fidelity of MLDS Implementation, 2018–19 to 2020–21**



**Figure 4. Perceptions of Principals on Professional Development, 2018–19 to 2020–21**

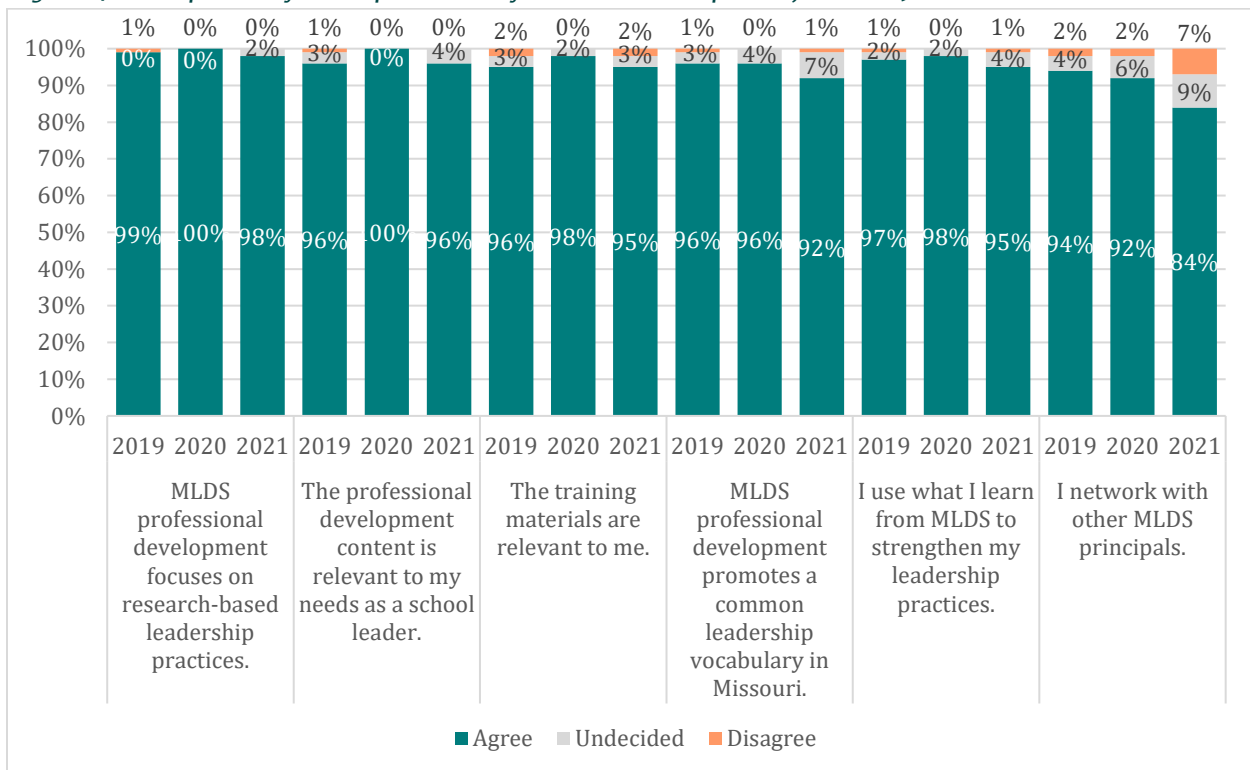


Table 4. Perceptions of Principals on the Importance of MLDS Components, 2020–21

| MLDS Component   | N   | Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not so important | Not at all important |
|--|-----|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices? |     |                     |                |                    |                  |                      |
| Competencies   | 244 | 47%                 | 41%            | 11%                | 0%               | 0%                   |
| Learning Experiences   | 244 | 66%                 | 30%            | 3%                 | 1%               | 0%                   |
| Treatments   | 244 | 47%                 | 41%            | 11%                | 1%               | 0%                   |

Figure 5. Perceptions of Principals on Benefits and Value of MLDS, 2018–19 to 2020–21

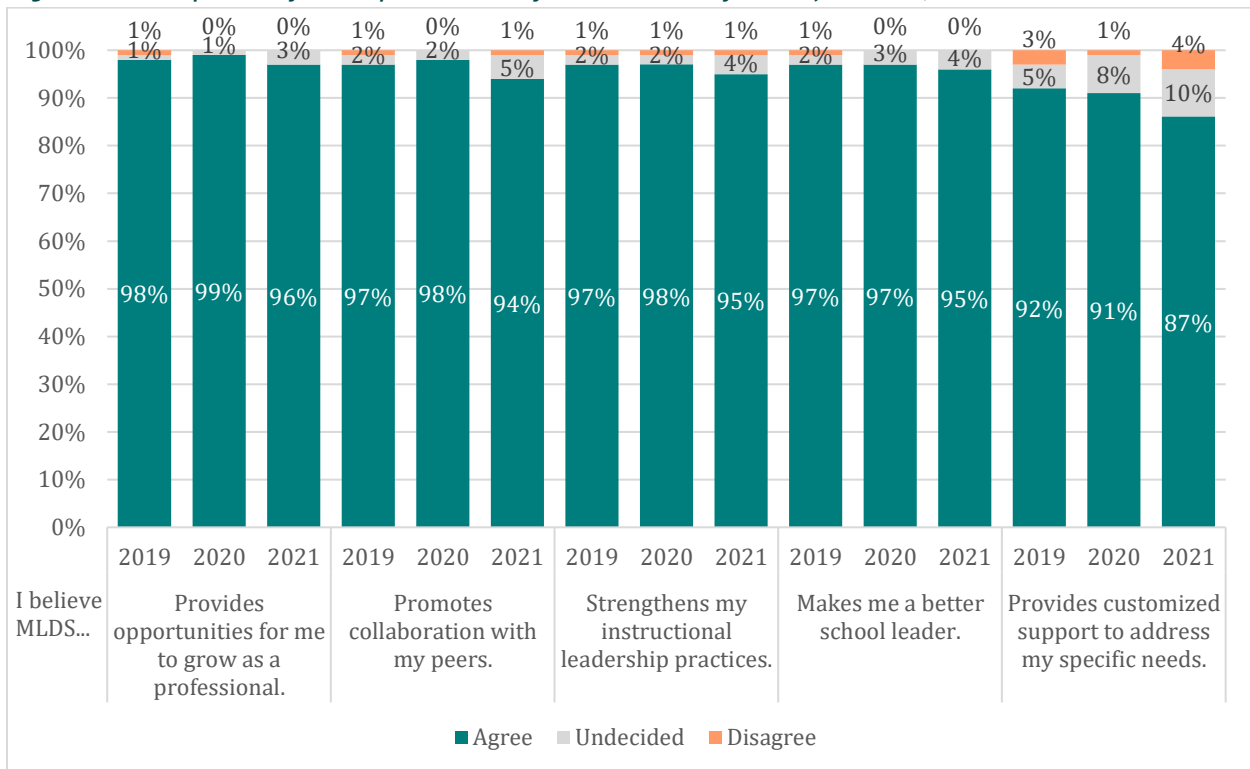


Figure 6. Perceptions of Superintendents on Benefits and Value of MLDS, 2018–19 to 2020–21

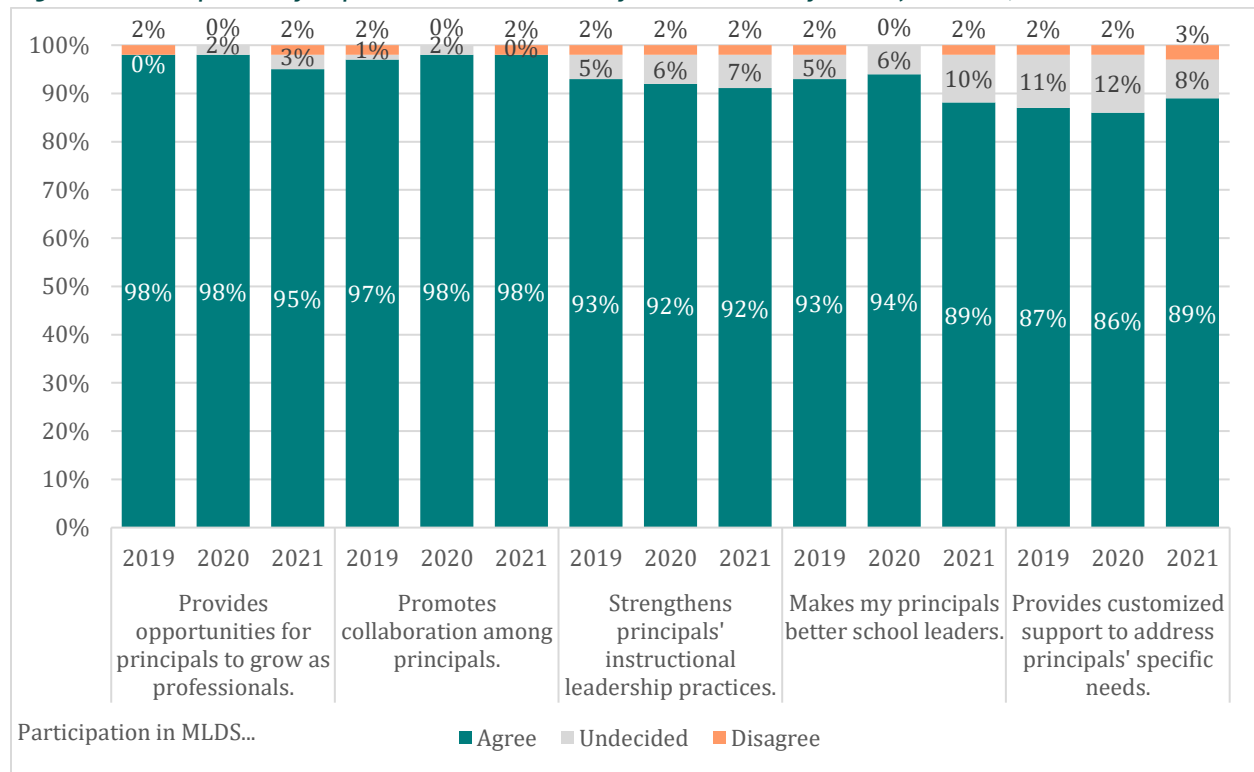
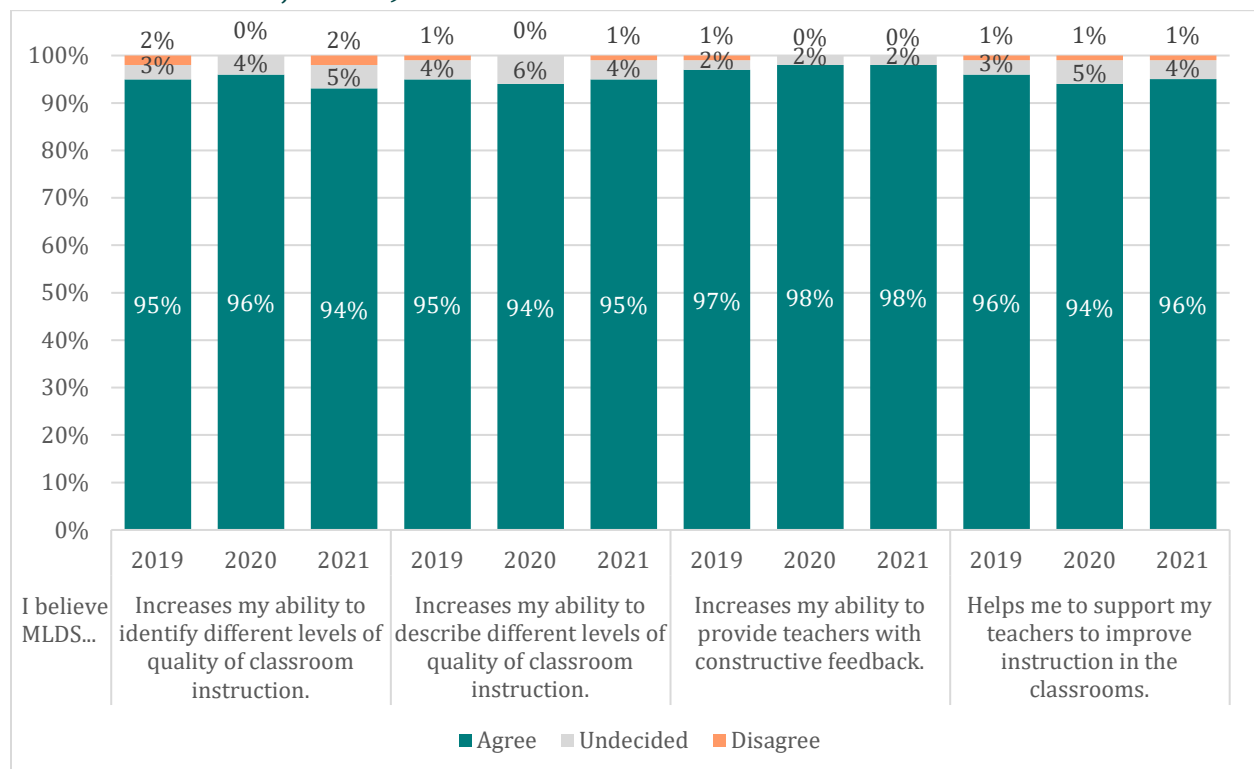
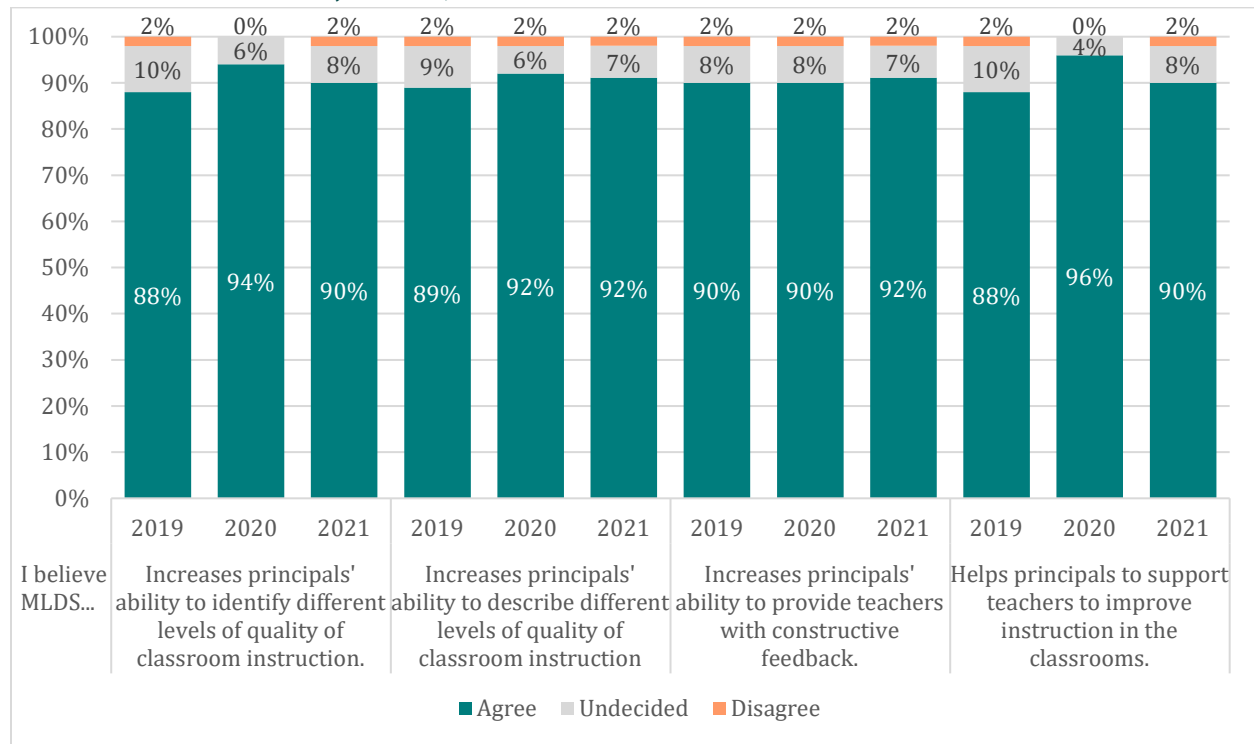


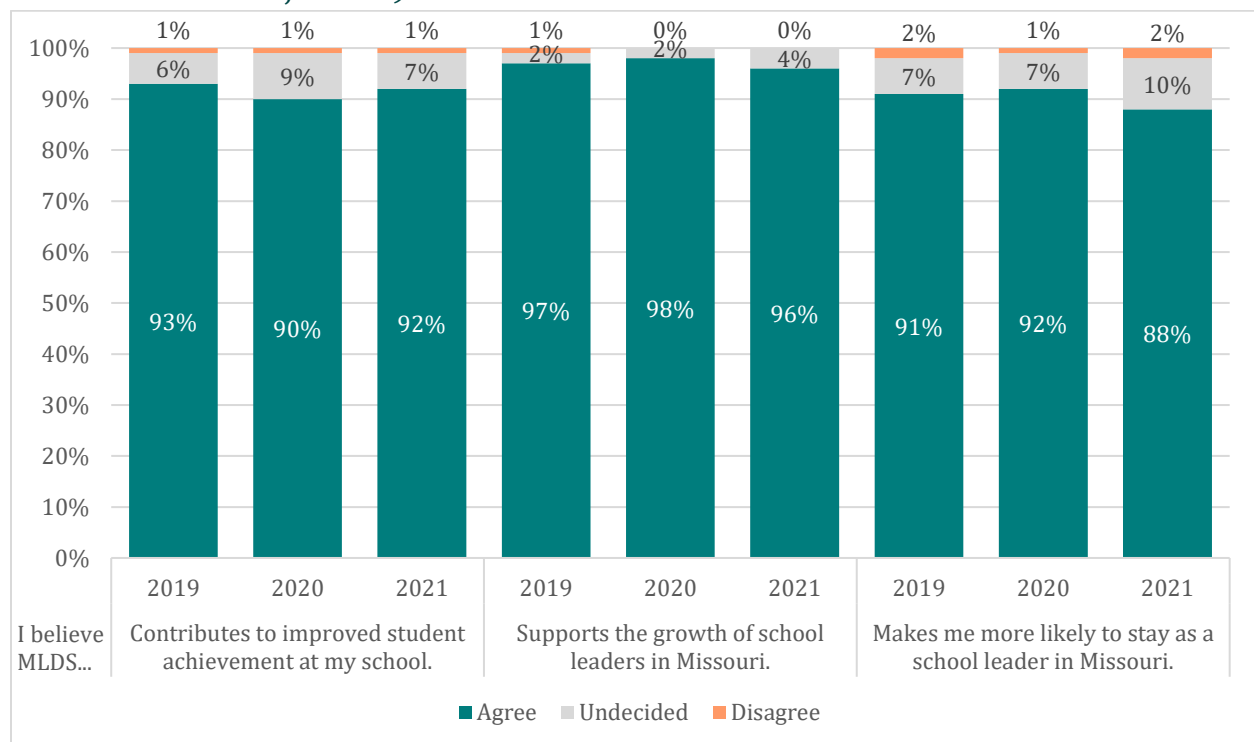
Figure 7. Perceptions of Principals on Impact of MLDS on Instructional Leadership Practices and Classroom Instruction, 2018–19 to 2020–21



**Figure 8. Perceptions of Superintendents on Impact of MLDS on Instructional Leadership Practices and Classroom Instruction, 2018–19 to 2020–21**

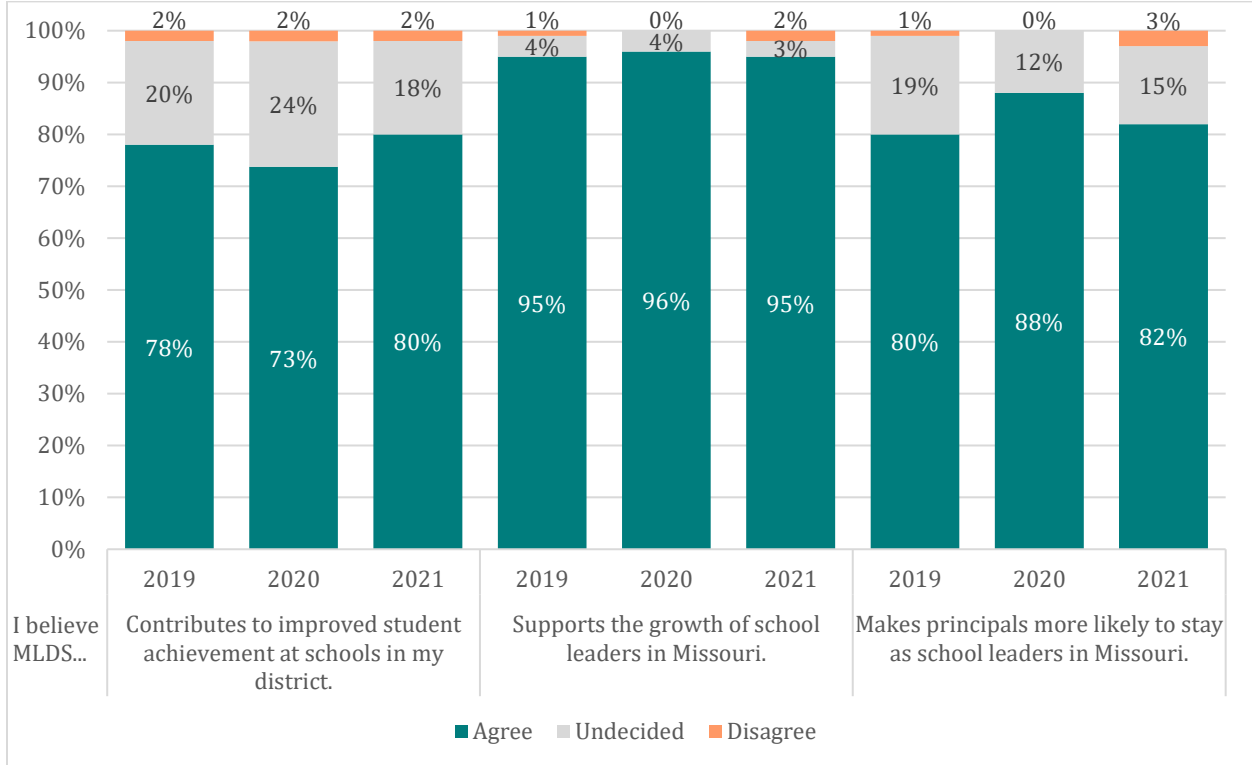


**Figure 9. Perceptions of Principals on Impact of MLDS on Student Achievement and School Leader Growth and Retention, 2018–19 to 2020–21**



*Note.* The survey prompts for superintendents were, respectively, “I am aware that principals can upgrade their administrator certificates by completing MLDS micro-credentials” and “Completing MLDS micro-credentials helps to improve principals’ leadership practices.”

**Figure 10. Perceptions of Superintendents on Impact of MLDS on Student Achievement and School Leader Growth and Retention, 2018–19 to 2020–21**



**Figure 11. Perceptions of Principals and Superintendents on MLDS Micro-Credentials, 2020–21**

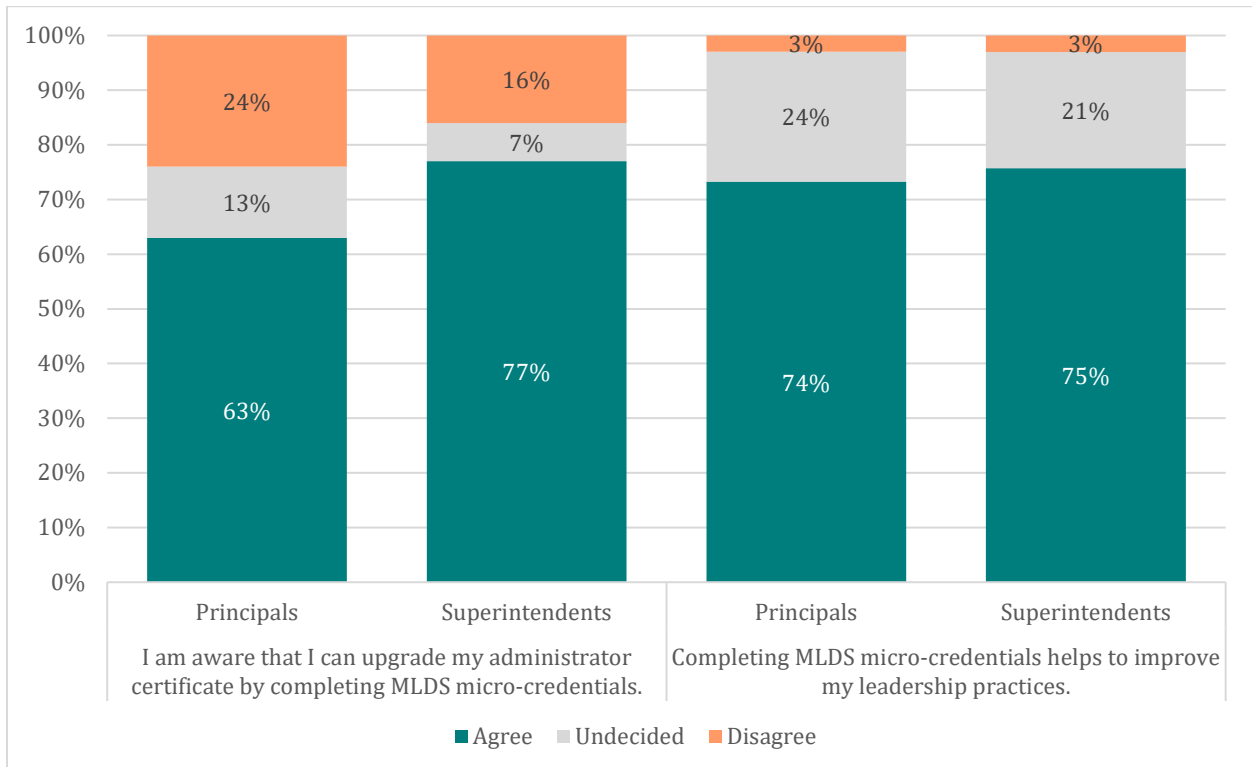


Figure 12. Perceptions of Principals on the Support from MLDS in 2020–21

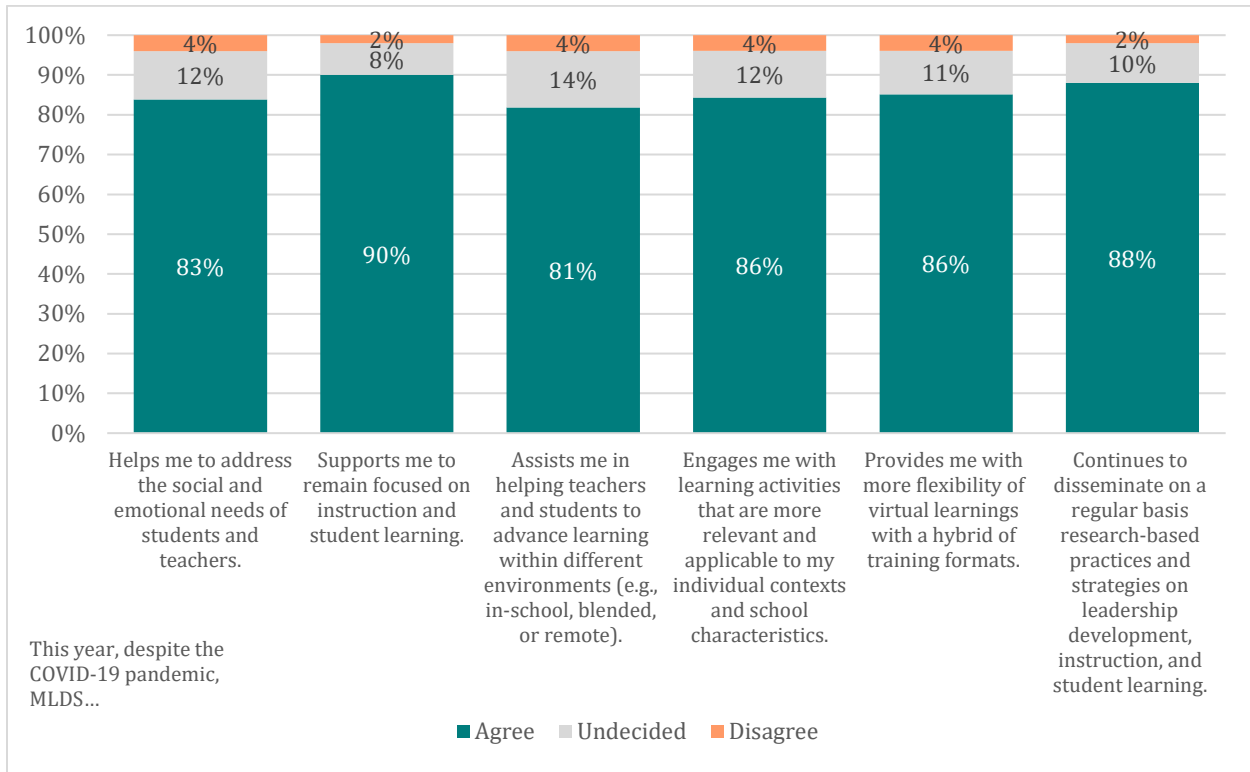


Figure 13. Perceptions of Superintendents on the Support from MLDS to Principals in 2020–21

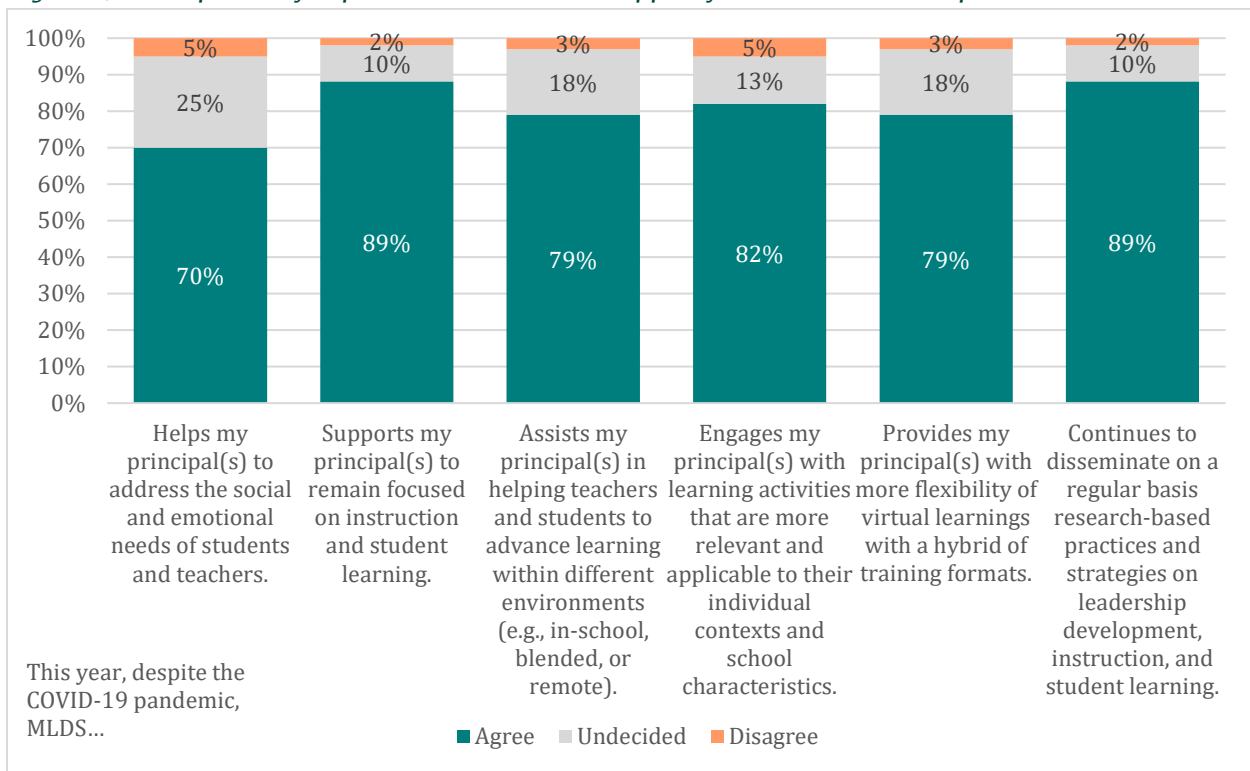


Table 5. Perceptions of Principals by RPDC Region, 2020–21

|  | South Central |     |     |     | Other RPDCs |     |     |     |
|--|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-----|
|  | n             | SA  | A   | U   | n           | SA  | A   | U   |
| Overall Perceptions  |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| The purpose of MLDS is clear to me.*   | 55            | 82% | 18% | 0%  | 196         | 61% | 35% | 2%  |
| I know where to get information about MLDS.*   | 55            | 71% | 29% | 0%  | 196         | 55% | 41% | 4%  |
| I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.*  | 55            | 76% | 24% | 0%  | 196         | 59% | 38% | 1%  |
| I see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.*  | 55            | 84% | 16% | 0%  | 196         | 61% | 34% | 4%  |
| I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.*  | 55            | 65% | 31% | 2%  | 196         | 47% | 43% | 6%  |
| I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.*  | 55            | 80% | 20% | 0%  | 196         | 49% | 39% | 8%  |
| I am aware that I can upgrade my administrator certificate by completing MLDS micro-credentials.   | 55            | 45% | 20% | 15% | 196         | 36% | 27% | 13% |
| Completing MLDS micro-credentials helps to improve my leadership practices.  | 55            | 58% | 18% | 24% | 195         | 41% | 32% | 24% |
| Fidelity of Implementation   |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal.* | 55            | 76% | 24% | 0%  | 196         | 51% | 40% | 6%  |
| The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills.*                     | 55            | 78% | 22% | 0%  | 196         | 55% | 37% | 8%  |
| The mentors/specialists effectively support me in my leadership role.*   | 55            | 84% | 16% | 0%  | 195         | 59% | 32% | 6%  |
| I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school.*   | 54            | 67% | 30% | 4%  | 194         | 45% | 43% | 9%  |
| Professional Development   |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices.*   | 54            | 87% | 13% | 0%  | 196         | 61% | 37% | 2%  |
| The professional development content is relevant to my needs as a school leader.*  | 55            | 85% | 15% | 0%  | 196         | 56% | 39% | 5%  |
| MLDS mentors/specialists help me to apply the content to practical situations.*  | 55            | 85% | 15% | 0%  | 196         | 59% | 35% | 4%  |
| MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like mine.*  | 55            | 87% | 11% | 2%  | 196         | 59% | 33% | 6%  |
| The training materials are relevant to me.*  | 55            | 78% | 22% | 0%  | 194         | 56% | 38% | 4%  |
| I use what I learn from MLDS to strengthen my leadership practices.*   | 55            | 78% | 22% | 0%  | 196         | 58% | 36% | 5%  |

|  | South Central |     |     |     | Other RPDCs |     |     |     |
|--|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-----|
|  | n             | SA  | A   | U   | n           | SA  | A   | U   |
| I network with other MLDS principals.*   | 55            | 65% | 25% | 4%  | 194         | 48% | 34% | 11% |
| MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri.*  | 55            | 76% | 24% | 0%  | 195         | 50% | 40% | 9%  |
| Benefits and Value   <i>I believe MLDS...</i>  |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| Provides opportunities for me to grow as a professional.*  | 55            | 87% | 13% | 0%  | 196         | 58% | 37% | 4%  |
| Promotes collaboration with my peers.*   | 55            | 87% | 13% | 0%  | 196         | 58% | 35% | 7%  |
| Provides customized support to address my specific needs.*   | 55            | 67% | 27% | 5%  | 196         | 41% | 43% | 11% |
| Strengthens my instructional leadership practices.*  | 55            | 80% | 20% | 0%  | 196         | 55% | 39% | 6%  |
| Makes me a better school leader.*  | 55            | 85% | 15% | 0%  | 196         | 58% | 36% | 6%  |
| Impact   <i>I believe MLDS...</i>  |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| Increases my ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.*  | 55            | 67% | 33% | 0%  | 197         | 47% | 45% | 6%  |
| Increases my ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.*  | 55            | 69% | 31% | 0%  | 197         | 46% | 48% | 5%  |
| Increases my ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.*  | 55            | 85% | 15% | 0%  | 197         | 58% | 39% | 3%  |
| Helps me to support my teachers to improve instruction in the classrooms.*   | 55            | 80% | 20% | 0%  | 197         | 53% | 42% | 5%  |
| Contributes to improved student achievement at my school.*   | 55            | 73% | 22% | 5%  | 197         | 45% | 47% | 7%  |
| Makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri.*  | 55            | 80% | 20% | 0%  | 196         | 48% | 36% | 12% |
| Supports the growth of school leaders in Missouri.*  | 55            | 82% | 18% | 0%  | 196         | 57% | 39% | 5%  |
| This Year's Experience   <i>This year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, MLDS...</i>  |               |     |     |     |             |     |     |     |
| Helps me to address the social and emotional needs of students and teachers.   | 55            | 40% | 49% | 11% | 197         | 32% | 49% | 13% |
| Supports me to remain focused on instruction and student learning.*  | 55            | 65% | 29% | 5%  | 197         | 41% | 48% | 9%  |
| Assists me in helping teachers and students to advance learning within different environments (e.g., in-school, blended, or remote). | 55            | 49% | 33% | 18% | 197         | 34% | 48% | 13% |
| Engages me with learning activities that are more relevant and applicable to my individual contexts and school characteristics.*     | 55            | 55% | 38% | 7%  | 197         | 38% | 46% | 13% |
| Provides me with more flexibility of virtual learnings with a hybrid of training formats.  | 55            | 49% | 35% | 16% | 197         | 40% | 47% | 10% |

|  | South Central |     |     |    | Other RPDCs |     |     |     |
|--|---------------|-----|-----|----|-------------|-----|-----|-----|
|  | n             | SA  | A   | U  | n           | SA  | A   | U   |
| Continues to disseminate on a regular basis research-based practices and strategies on leadership development, instruction, and student learning.* | 55            | 58% | 33% | 9% | 196         | 41% | 46% | 11% |

*Note.* As the percentages of MLDS principals who disagree or strongly disagree with the survey questions were very small, the table shows only the percentages of MLDS principals who strongly agree (SA), agree (A), and are undecided (U) about the survey questions. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between the two groups.

**Table 6. Principals’ Perceived Importance of MLDS Components by RPDC Region, 2020–21**

| MLDS Component        | RPDC          | N   | Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not so important | Not at all important |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Competencies*         | South Central | 54  | 70%                 | 26%            | 4%                 | 0%               | 0%                   |
|                       | Other RPDCs   | 190 | 41%                 | 45%            | 13%                | 1%               | 1%                   |
| Learning Experiences* | South Central | 54  | 83%                 | 17%            | 0%                 | 0%               | 0%                   |
|                       | Other RPDCs   | 190 | 61%                 | 34%            | 4%                 | 1%               | 1%                   |
| Treatments*           | South Central | 54  | 70%                 | 28%            | 2%                 | 0%               | 0%                   |
|                       | Other RPDCs   | 190 | 40%                 | 45%            | 14%                | 1%               | 1%                   |

*Note.* \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between the two groups. The survey question was “How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals’ leadership practices?”

**Table 7. Perceptions of Principals by Years of Experience with MLDS, 2020–21**

|   | 1 Year |     | 2 Years |     | 3 Years |     | 4 or More Years |     |
|---|--------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|-----------------|-----|
|   | SA     | A   | SA      | A   | SA      | A   | SA              | A   |
| Overall Perceptions   |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| The purpose of MLDS is clear to me.*  | 57%    | 39% | 62%     | 34% | 70%     | 30% | 94%             | 6%  |
| I know where to get information about MLDS.*  | 47%    | 48% | 54%     | 42% | 65%     | 33% | 91%             | 9%  |
| I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.*                                       | 47%    | 49% | 62%     | 35% | 70%     | 28% | 97%             | 3%  |
| I see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.*     | 56%    | 39% | 66%     | 29% | 72%     | 26% | 88%             | 13% |
| I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.* | 41%    | 50% | 51%     | 40% | 61%     | 33% | 66%             | 28% |

|  | 1 Year |     | 2 Years |     | 3 Years |     | 4 or More Years |     |
|--|--------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|-----------------|-----|
|  | SA     | A   | SA      | A   | SA      | A   | SA              | A   |
| I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.*  | 44%    | 44% | 54%     | 35% | 61%     | 30% | 84%             | 16% |
| I am aware that I can upgrade my administrator certificate by completing MLDS micro-credentials.*  | 34%    | 25% | 35%     | 29% | 37%     | 28% | 56%             | 13% |
| Completing MLDS micro-credentials helps to improve my leadership practices.  | 40%    | 30% | 40%     | 34% | 52%     | 28% | 56%             | 16% |
| <b>Fidelity of Implementation</b>  |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal.* | 48%    | 41% | 53%     | 40% | 61%     | 35% | 84%             | 16% |
| The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills.*                     | 48%    | 42% | 59%     | 34% | 67%     | 28% | 84%             | 16% |
| The mentors/specialists effectively support me in my leadership role.*   | 57%    | 36% | 64%     | 29% | 65%     | 28% | 88%             | 9%  |
| I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school.*   | 43%    | 43% | 46%     | 43% | 52%     | 41% | 75%             | 22% |
| <b>Professional Development</b>  |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices.*   | 56%    | 43% | 65%     | 33% | 74%     | 24% | 88%             | 13% |
| The professional development content is relevant to my needs as a school leader.*  | 56%    | 39% | 56%     | 40% | 72%     | 24% | 84%             | 16% |
| MLDS mentors/specialists help me to apply the content to practical situations.*  | 57%    | 36% | 64%     | 32% | 70%     | 28% | 84%             | 16% |
| MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like mine.*  | 56%    | 36% | 68%     | 25% | 63%     | 33% | 88%             | 6%  |
| The training materials are relevant to me.*  | 55%    | 36% | 60%     | 36% | 63%     | 35% | 78%             | 22% |
| I use what I learn from MLDS to strengthen my leadership practices.*   | 57%    | 33% | 58%     | 40% | 70%     | 28% | 78%             | 22% |
| I network with other MLDS principals.*   | 40%    | 36% | 50%     | 37% | 59%     | 33% | 81%             | 6%  |
| MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri.*  | 43%    | 43% | 56%     | 38% | 64%     | 31% | 78%             | 22% |
| <b>Benefits and Value   I believe MLDS...</b>  |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| Provides opportunities for me to grow as a professional.*  | 50%    | 43% | 61%     | 36% | 78%     | 20% | 94%             | 6%  |
| Promotes collaboration with my peers.*   | 51%    | 38% | 62%     | 32% | 74%     | 26% | 91%             | 9%  |
| Provides customized support to address my specific needs.*   | 40%    | 41% | 41%     | 46% | 52%     | 39% | 75%             | 22% |

|  | 1 Year |     | 2 Years |     | 3 Years |     | 4 or More Years |     |
|--|--------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|-----------------|-----|
|  | SA     | A   | SA      | A   | SA      | A   | SA              | A   |
| Strengthens my instructional leadership practices.*  | 51%    | 36% | 59%     | 39% | 61%     | 39% | 88%             | 13% |
| Makes me a better school leader.*  | 56%    | 34% | 61%     | 35% | 70%     | 30% | 88%             | 13% |
| Impact   <i>I believe MLDS...</i>  |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| Increases my ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction.*  | 39%    | 48% | 52%     | 44% | 54%     | 43% | 78%             | 22% |
| Increases my ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.*  | 42%    | 49% | 52%     | 44% | 52%     | 48% | 75%             | 25% |
| Increases my ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.*  | 56%    | 40% | 61%     | 35% | 72%     | 28% | 84%             | 16% |
| Helps me to support my teachers to improve instruction in the classrooms.*   | 46%    | 46% | 60%     | 35% | 63%     | 37% | 84%             | 16% |
| Contributes to improved student achievement at my school.*   | 43%    | 46% | 47%     | 45% | 54%     | 43% | 81%             | 16% |
| Makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri.*  | 48%    | 38% | 52%     | 32% | 63%     | 35% | 75%             | 19% |
| Supports the growth of school leaders in Missouri.*  | 53%    | 42% | 61%     | 35% | 67%     | 33% | 84%             | 16% |
| This Year's Experience   <i>This year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, MLDS...</i>  |        |     |         |     |         |     |                 |     |
| Helps me to address the social and emotional needs of students and teachers.*  | 31%    | 53% | 27%     | 55% | 35%     | 46% | 59%             | 28% |
| Supports me to remain focused on instruction and student learning.*  | 44%    | 49% | 41%     | 47% | 43%     | 41% | 69%             | 25% |
| Assists me in helping teachers and students to advance learning within different environments (e.g., in-school, blended, or remote).*              | 34%    | 48% | 32%     | 47% | 30%     | 48% | 69%             | 22% |
| Engages me with learning activities that are more relevant and applicable to my individual contexts and school characteristics.*                   | 39%    | 46% | 34%     | 49% | 41%     | 43% | 69%             | 25% |
| Provides me with more flexibility of virtual learnings with a hybrid of training formats.*   | 34%    | 46% | 40%     | 51% | 41%     | 41% | 69%             | 25% |
| Continues to disseminate on a regular basis research-based practices and strategies on leadership development, instruction, and student learning.* | 39%    | 47% | 39%     | 49% | 48%     | 39% | 72%             | 22% |

*Note.* As the percentages of MLDS principals who disagree or strongly disagree with the survey questions were very small and there are four groups, the table shows only the percentages of MLDS principals who strongly agree (SA), and agree (A) with the survey items. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between MLDS principals who have participated, in total, in the MLDS program for 1 year and those in the program for 4 or more years. N (1 year) = 90. N (2 years) = 85. N (3 years) = 46. N (4 or more years) = 32. Responses to survey questions were not required, therefore the numbers of respondents may vary throughout the survey questions.

**Table 8. Principals’ Perceived Importance of MLDS Components by Years of Experience with MLDS, 2020–21**

| MLDS Component        | 1 Year              |                | 2 Years             |                | 3 Years             |                | 4 or More Years     |                |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                       | Extremely Important | Very Important | Extremely Important | Very Important | Extremely Important | Very Important | Extremely Important | Very Important |
| Competencies*         | 46%                 | 38%            | 40%                 | 47%            | 47%                 | 47%            | 69%                 | 25%            |
| Learning Experiences* | 61%                 | 31%            | 57%                 | 39%            | 69%                 | 31%            | 94%                 | 3%             |
| Treatments*           | 40%                 | 40%            | 43%                 | 48%            | 49%                 | 44%            | 72%                 | 22%            |

Note. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between MLDS principals who have participated, in total, in the MLDS program for 1 year and those in the program for 4 or more years. N (1 year) = 90. N (2 years) = 85. N (3 years) = 46. N (4 or more years) = 32. Responses to survey questions were not required, therefore the numbers of respondents may vary throughout the survey questions. The survey question was “How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals’ leadership practices?”

**Figure 14. Perceptions of Principals on Mentors and Specialists, 2018–19 to 2020–21**

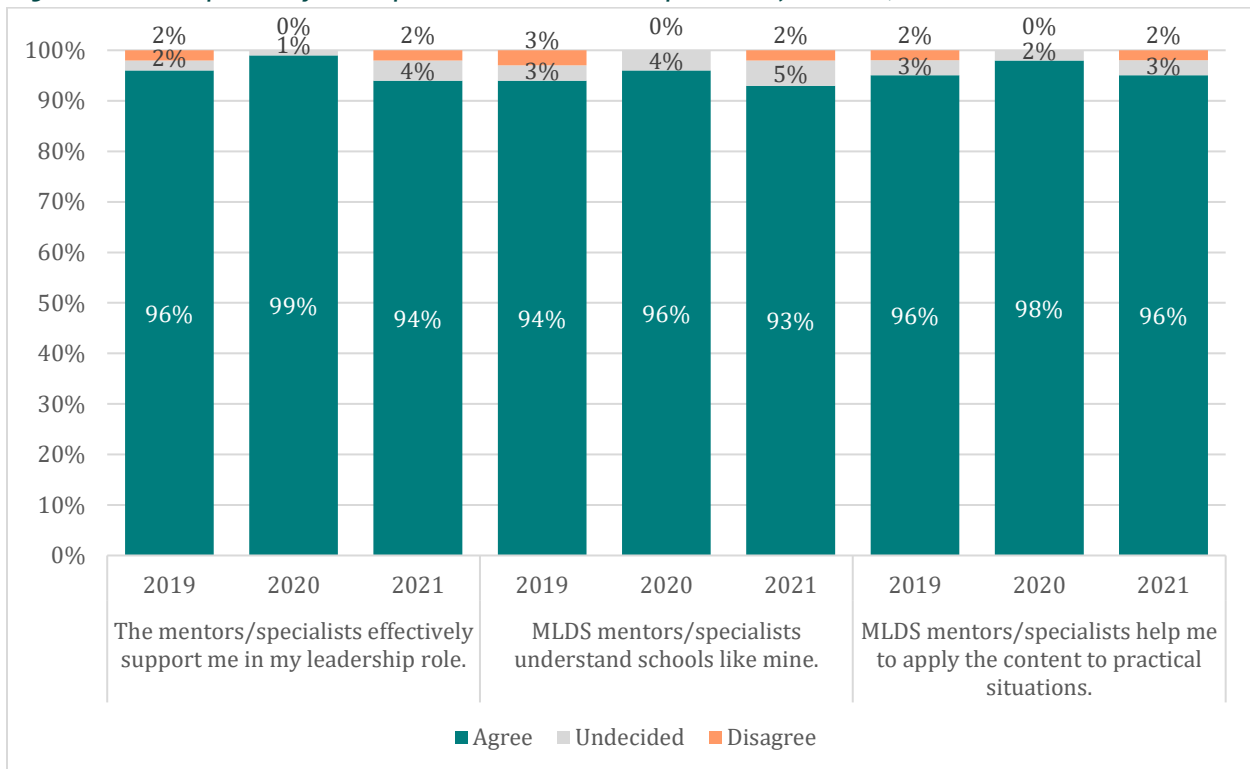


Table 9. Perceptions of Classroom Teachers, 2020–21

|   | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|---|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| Principals' Participation in MLDS   |    |       |           |          |
| I am aware of my principal's participation in MLDS.   | 54 | 76%   | 4%        | 20%      |
| I see a connection, through my principal's participation in MLDS, between leadership development and classroom instruction.               | 53 | 74%   | 21%       | 6%       |
| I see a connection, through my principal's participation in MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.                    | 53 | 72%   | 23%       | 6%       |
| My principal applies the learnings from MLDS to practical situations at my school.  | 52 | 75%   | 21%       | 4%       |
| My principal uses the learnings from MLDS to strengthen his/her instructional leadership practices.                                       | 53 | 75%   | 21%       | 4%       |
| Professional Development Offerings from the Principal   <i>The professional development offerings that I receive from my principal...</i> |    |       |           |          |
| Are useful to me.   | 52 | 83%   | 12%       | 6%       |
| Are of high quality.  | 52 | 83%   | 15%       | 2%       |
| Are relevant to my work.  | 52 | 83%   | 10%       | 8%       |
| Are differentiated to meet my instructional learning needs.   | 52 | 69%   | 21%       | 10%      |
| Focus on research-based instructional practices.  | 52 | 90%   | 8%        | 2%       |
| Strengthen my instructional practices.  | 52 | 85%   | 12%       | 4%       |
| Support me in meeting the learning needs of my students.  | 52 | 79%   | 19%       | 2%       |
| Teacher Evaluation by the Principal   |    |       |           |          |
| My principal is capable of identifying different levels of quality of classroom instruction.  | 52 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| My principal is competent to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction.   | 52 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| My principal is qualified to conduct observations of my instructional practices.  | 52 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
| My principal provides constructive feedback on improving my instructional practices.  | 52 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
| My principal uses the results of my evaluation to inform my professional development plan for next year.                                  | 52 | 79%   | 13%       | 8%       |
| Additional Leadership Practices of the Principal   <i>At my school, the principal...</i>  |    |       |           |          |
| Promotes teachers' reflection on instructional practices.   | 53 | 94%   | 4%        | 2%       |
| Encourages instruction-focused dialogue between teachers.   | 53 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
| Encourages instruction-focused dialogue between teachers and school administrators.   | 53 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |

|  | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|--|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| Promotes collaboration between teachers.                                   | 53 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| Promotes collaboration between teachers and school administrators.         | 53 | 89%   | 8%        | 4%       |
| Supports the work that teachers do in the classroom.                       | 53 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
| Promotes continuous learning for all teachers.                             | 53 | 87%   | 9%        | 4%       |
| Focuses on instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.                       | 53 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| Holds high academic expectations for all students.                         | 53 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| <b>MLDS Impact   I believe my principal's participation in MLDS...</b>     |    |       |           |          |
| Helps my principal to support teachers to improve instructional practices. | 53 | 77%   | 21%       | 2%       |
| Supports the recruitment of effective teachers.                            | 52 | 71%   | 25%       | 4%       |
| Makes effective teachers more likely to stay at my school.                 | 53 | 68%   | 23%       | 9%       |
| Contributes to improvement in student achievement at my school.            | 52 | 81%   | 19%       | 0%       |

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. Agree is a composite of strongly agree/agree. Disagree is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.

**Table 10. Perceptions of Previous MLDS Principals, 2020–21**

|  | Year | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|--|------|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| <b>Overall Perceptions</b>   |      |    |       |           |          |
| The purpose of MLDS is clear to me.  | 2019 | 58 | 98%   | 0%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 3%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| I know where to get information about MLDS.  | 2019 | 58 | 95%   | 2%        | 3%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 0%        | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| I receive information about MLDS on a regular basis.                                       | 2019 | 58 | 90%   | 2%        | 9%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 92%   | 4%        | 4%       |
| I see a connection, through MLDS, between leadership development and student learning.     | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 5%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| I receive support from my district in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school. | 2019 | 58 | 86%   | 5%        | 9%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 92%   | 6%        | 2%       |

|   | Year | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|---|------|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| I receive support from my RPDC in applying what I have learned from MLDS at my school.  | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 85%   | 15%       | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 86%   | 8%        | 6%       |
| I am aware that I can upgrade my administrator certificate by completing MLDS micro-credentials.  | 2021 | 50 | 72%   | 12%       | 16%      |
| Completing MLDS micro-credentials helps to improve my leadership practices.   | 2021 | 50 | 76%   | 24%       | 0%       |
| <b>Fidelity of Implementation</b>   |      |    |       |           |          |
| The level of support provided by MLDS (e.g., number of sessions or contacts, frequency and duration of sessions) is appropriate for building my leadership capacity as a principal. | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 5%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 3%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 49 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| The MLDS methods (e.g., regional meetings, state conferences, learning labs, one-to-one mentoring and coaching) are helpful in developing my leadership skills.                     | 2019 | 58 | 97%   | 2%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 88%   | 12%       | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| The mentors/specialists effectively support me in my leadership role.   | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 3%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| I am regularly using what I learn from MLDS at my school.   | 2019 | 58 | 95%   | 2%        | 3%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| <b>Professional Development</b>   |      |    |       |           |          |
| MLDS professional development focuses on research-based leadership practices.   | 2019 | 58 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 3%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| The professional development content is relevant to my needs as a school leader.  | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 5%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 0%        | 4%       |
| MLDS mentors/specialists help me to apply the content to practical situations.  | 2019 | 58 | 95%   | 2%        | 3%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 4%        | 0%       |
| MLDS mentors/specialists understand schools like mine.  | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 97%   | 0%        | 3%       |
|   | 2021 | 49 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
| The training materials are relevant to me.  | 2019 | 57 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |

|  | Year | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|--|------|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| I use what I learn from MLDS to strengthen my leadership practices.                    | 2019 | 58 | 97%   | 2%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| I network with other MLDS principals.  | 2019 | 58 | 91%   | 3%        | 5%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 88%   | 6%        | 6%       |
|  | 2021 | 49 | 94%   | 2%        | 4%       |
| MLDS professional development promotes a common leadership vocabulary in Missouri.     | 2019 | 58 | 91%   | 3%        | 5%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 96%   | 2%        | 2%       |
| <b>Benefits and Value   I believe MLDS...</b>  |      |    |       |           |          |
| Provides opportunities for me to grow as a professional.                               | 2019 | 58 | 98%   | 0%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
| Promotes collaboration with my peers.  | 2019 | 58 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 92%   | 8%        | 0%       |
| Provides customized support to address my specific needs.                              | 2019 | 58 | 88%   | 7%        | 5%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 85%   | 12%       | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 86%   | 12%       | 2%       |
| Strengthens my instructional leadership practices.                                     | 2019 | 58 | 97%   | 2%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
| Makes me a better school leader.   | 2019 | 58 | 97%   | 2%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
| <b>Impact   I believe MLDS...</b>  |      |    |       |           |          |
| Increases my ability to identify different levels of quality of classroom instruction. | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 3%        | 3%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 94%   | 2%        | 4%       |
| Increases my ability to describe different levels of quality of classroom instruction. | 2019 | 58 | 88%   | 7%        | 5%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 6%        | 3%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 92%   | 4%        | 4%       |
| Increases my ability to provide teachers with constructive feedback.                   | 2019 | 58 | 98%   | 0%        | 2%       |
|  | 2020 | 34 | 94%   | 6%        | 0%       |
|  | 2021 | 50 | 98%   | 2%        | 0%       |

|   | Year | N  | Agree | Undecided | Disagree |
|---|------|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| Helps me to support my teachers to improve instruction in the classrooms.   | 2019 | 58 | 93%   | 5%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 88%   | 12%       | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 94%   | 2%        | 4%       |
| Contributes to improved student achievement at my school.   | 2019 | 58 | 88%   | 10%       | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 88%   | 9%        | 3%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 90%   | 6%        | 4%       |
| Makes me more likely to stay as a school leader in Missouri.  | 2019 | 58 | 90%   | 5%        | 5%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 85%   | 12%       | 3%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 88%   | 8%        | 4%       |
| Supports the growth of school leaders in Missouri.  | 2019 | 58 | 98%   | 0%        | 2%       |
|   | 2020 | 34 | 91%   | 9%        | 0%       |
|   | 2021 | 50 | 100%  | 0%        | 0%       |
| <b>This Year's Experience   <i>This year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, MLDS...</i></b>  |      |    |       |           |          |
| Helps me to address the social and emotional needs of students and teachers.  | 2021 | 50 | 78%   | 20%       | 2%       |
| Supports me to remain focused on instruction and student learning.  | 2021 | 50 | 84%   | 14%       | 2%       |
| Assists me in helping teachers and students to advance learning within different environments (e.g., in-school, blended, or remote).              | 2021 | 49 | 82%   | 16%       | 2%       |
| Engages me with learning activities that are more relevant and applicable to my individual contexts and school characteristics.                   | 2021 | 50 | 86%   | 12%       | 2%       |
| Provides me with more flexibility of virtual learnings with a hybrid of training formats.   | 2021 | 49 | 88%   | 12%       | 0%       |
| Continues to disseminate on a regular basis research-based practices and strategies on leadership development, instruction, and student learning. | 2021 | 49 | 90%   | 10%       | 0%       |

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%. Agree is a composite of strongly agree/agree. Disagree is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. MLDS = Missouri Leadership Development System.

**Table 11. Previous MLDS Principals' Perceived Importance of MLDS Components, 2020–21**

| MLDS Component   | N  | Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not so important | Not at all important |
|--|----|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| How important are the following MLDS components in strengthening principals' leadership practices? |    |                     |                |                    |                  |                      |
| Competencies   | 50 | 46%                 | 44%            | 10%                | 0%               | 0%                   |
| Learning Experiences   | 50 | 66%                 | 30%            | 4%                 | 0%               | 0%                   |
| Treatments   | 50 | 42%                 | 46%            | 12%                | 0%               | 0%                   |

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add up to 100%.