



Partnership for Leaders in Education

Darden School of Business
Curry School of Education

Position Description: District Support Chief

BACKGROUND

The Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE) is a joint venture of the University of Virginia Darden School of Business, and the Curry School of Education – both nationally ranked in the top 20 graduate programs in their fields. A truly unique, collective enterprise established in 2003, PLE's evidence-based, evolving approach has been developed by successful practitioners, leaders and scholars, and strategically combines the most innovative thinking in business and education to prepare and strengthen education leaders for the demands of leading schools and school systems.

Working side by side with its client partners, the PLE seeks to instill core competencies in system and school level administrators to help contextualize largescale issues, and cultivate real, cascading change. Among the many distinguishing characteristics of PLE's approach are an authentic investment in working within the district construct, and an unwavering belief in the transformative power of leadership. Combining world-class executive education with ongoing, embedded district support, PLE empowers courageous district and school leaders to re-examine the most essential practices, make the critical and bold systemic changes necessary to rapidly and sustainably improve student learning, and enhance the lives of the children and families who depend on the vitality and excellence of public schools.

PLE's innovative, systemic approach to school improvement has resulted in remarkable gains in student achievement in schools and districts across the country. Over 13 cohorts, PLE has served over 70 school districts, across 18 states, many through multiple engagements. Notably, **most of PLE's partner schools outgain state averages, almost 50% experience double-digit proficiency gains within two years, and one in five schools achieves over 25-point gains within three years.** In just the past two years, twelve of PLE's district partners have had multiple schools experience **double-digit gains in student achievement**, coupled with increases in school letter grades.

In order to deepen gains and establish additional proof points, the PLE launched a sustainability program in partner districts, and customized programs for district Cabinet leadership. District and school leaders in the sustainability program have improved how they work together to maximize the efforts of others, identify and solve problems, and rethink organizational design to meet student needs. These leaders are now poised to take those efforts to the next level, while further distributing and growing leadership at the LEA and school levels, to create cultures of continuous improvement that will last beyond changes in leadership. Ultimately, these programs will inform broader efforts to improve schools, systems, and districts across the country.

Validating the strength of its programs, the PLE was recently recognized by RAND and the Wallace Foundation as one of only two leadership development efforts in the country that qualifies as "evidence-based" under ESSA. What's more, since 2004, PLE has successfully moved its funding model from one that was philanthropy-dependent, to a fee-for-service model in which program fees cover program delivery costs, as well as research and administration expenses.

OPPORTUNITY

Growth and a recent review of organizational priorities have prompted the PLE to expand the strength of its team to include two more team members – District Support Chiefs - who will support PLE's core programs. The timing of these hires is significant and compelling for candidates, in that the incoming Chiefs will be able to collaborate with the existing team to shape the final scope of the District Support Chief roles in a way that best supports the work, and leverages candidates' distinct talents and interests. PLE also offers an opportunity to join an organization known among partners and thought leaders alike, for providing high-quality, high-touch, need-informed strategies and frameworks that empower participants to contextualize and take ownership of the school improvement process. The District Support Chiefs will work among talented, dedicated and

collaborative professionals, to deliver and augment best-in-class programs and supports to LEAs and SEAs across the country, and they will contribute to the thinking about how to best design their roles to maximize organizational capacity. While not directly accountable for program or business development, the District Support Chiefs will play an important role in PLE's growth and evolution, positioning it as a preferred provider of ESSA-indicated school improvement support, and contributing to the creation of an engine for proactive partner development, to ensure revenue sustainability and maximum impact.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The District Support Chiefs will advise partner school systems, and support the design and execution of strategies that establish the conditions and build capacity for wide-reaching school and school system improvement. **Specific responsibilities include:**

Program Delivery:

- strengthening the coordination of overall program implementation, impact of site visits and action plans, and execution of a system of tailored support;
- ensuring that PLE's partners experience a world-class experience in support and executive education;
- strengthening the ways in which districts leverage instructional systems, school leadership team support, and accountability and talent management strategies to increase the chances of successful execution of sustainable change for partners;
- providing thoughtful guidance as the primary contact for a select group of district leadership teams and principal supervisors, maintaining close contact to help them design and execute a vision for transformation success;
- collaborating with the Chief of Programs to ensure the delivery of world-class programs that result in meaningful and impactful action;
- collaborating with the Chief of Research to ensure PLE executes on a strong theory of action and continuously re-assesses how to improve based on leading research;
- coordinating and collaborating with PLE consultants across the country;
- developing and nurturing PLE's existing state, district, school and University of Virginia relationships; and
- working with the Executive Director to consider new initiatives and partner offerings, and to continuously refine those that are ongoing.

Internal:

- working in collaboration with the Executive Director, colleagues, and University partners to continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of pathways to achieving the goals and objectives of the organization;
- contributing to the strategic assessment of programs and partner satisfaction; and
- serving as a key thought partner to the Executive Director by maintaining and developing relationships in the field with external thought partners whose perspectives can both challenge and enhance PLE's thinking, position, and strategies.

QUALIFICATIONS

Above all, the District Support Chiefs will champion strong, collective leadership and thoughtful organizational design, and will believe in their transformative power. The successful candidates will be consultative, collaborative, and results oriented leaders, and bring the following:

Experience:

- significant professional experience, including working in or with school systems, with system leaders, implementing innovative school improvement initiatives;
- an understanding of the current national education policy context, and recognition of the ways in which it varies from one state or district to another;
- experience managing and delivering ambitious initiatives with a focus on quality and results;

- experience leading healthy change, and creating organizational strength and synergy by encouraging collaboration and cohesion; and
- experience in an organization which must influence its stakeholders in the absence of any formal authority over them.

Skills:

- well-honed ability to listen actively and communicate authentic understanding to a variety of stakeholders;
- political savvy and instincts sharp enough to navigate and establish trusting, productive relationships across a wide swath of both internal and external stakeholders;
- the entrepreneurial acumen required to leverage resources, seize opportunities, and design or expand partnerships with districts to maximize impact;
- finesse to manage complex situations and multiple priorities while focusing on mission critical work;
- demonstrated ability to think strategically and execute tactically;
- excellent qualitative and quantitative analytical skills;
- excellent project management skills; ability to manage large, long-term, complex projects; and
- ability to exercise sound judgment independently, exercising a high degree of initiative and discretion in decision making to achieve organizational objectives.

Personal Characteristics:

- commitment to continued professional and personal growth;
- a deeply held belief that school systems must be committed to equity, and prioritize the needs of under-served students; the authenticity and credibility to lead critical conversations about race and equity in education;
- demonstrated commitment to working with people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives;
- a high degree of self-awareness, emotional intelligence and excellent interpersonal skills;
- a level of integrity and energy compelling enough to bring divergent groups together in a collaborative fashion and inspire them to act; and
- entrepreneurship and a high level of motivation.

EDUCATION

Bachelor's degree required. Strong preference for graduate degree in education, business or law.

REPORTING

The District Support Chiefs will report to the Executive Director, and work in close collaboration with other Chiefs, the administrative team, graduate assistants and faculty members.

LOCATION

While residence in Charlottesville is preferred, a remote living arrangement is possible, as the District Support Chief positions require up to 50% travel.

COMPENSATION

Compensation for this role is highly competitive. The University of Virginia Darden School Foundation provides a broad and competitive range of benefits, including generous contribution to retirement savings.

TO APPLY

The review of applications will begin immediately, and will continue until the position is filled. Applications, including a cover letter and resume, should be submitted *electronically*, and will be considered on a rolling bases. Nominations, applications, or inquiries about the position and/or the search process should be directed to Leslie Nair, via leslie@promise54.org.