

School Leader Pathways and Pipelines

How can states help districts and schools access more quality principals?

Principals play a critical role in supporting teachers and raising student achievement, yet most state policies regarding leadership preparation need significant improvement. While districts control nearly every aspect of the recruiting and hiring process, states have authority over entry into the principal role, including:

Approval of principal preparation programs, and setting program and applicant standards, coursework, and on-the-job learning time.

Establishment of licensure and certification rules, including initial licensure and renewals.

Oversight of preparation programs, including collecting and monitoring data regarding recruitment, selection, and performance.

Collect and use better data

With better data, states can know whether preparation programs are meeting both the quantity and quality needs of districts. States should adopt a data-tracking system that enables officials to answer the following questions:

Supply

- How many principals do districts need to hire on an annual basis, including by type of school or program (e.g., turnaround, rural, etc.)?
- How many graduates does each preparation program produce annually?
- How many graduates secure licenses and obtain principalships?

Performance

- Are graduates of preparation programs effective at raising student and educator outcomes?
- Which preparation programs are most effective based on graduate performance?
- Are only effective programs being renewed?

Expand pathways

Move from yesterday's narrow pathways based on a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership training...

- Diversify the types of training programs to meet targeted needs (e.g., rural, turnaround, and new schools) by equipping principals with specialized training.
- Allow training programs to be operated by a diverse array of providers, including nonprofits, districts, and CMOs, in addition to universities.
- Focus on increasing diversity among principal ranks, and allow for training of non-traditional candidates who can apply their experience to leading schools.

...to expanded principal pathways that meet a broader array of needs

Raise the bar for training and preparation programs

Adopt statewide leadership standards and require programs to align with them

- Standards should be rigorous, research-based, and aligned with expectations for students. The National Policy Board for Education Administration and the Council of Chief State School Officers recently updated the most commonly adopted standards (formerly called ISLLC standards), available here: [2015 Professional Standards for Education Leaders](#).

Require programs to provide relevant training and real experiences

- Principals should receive training on how to focus on and improve school climate and how to retain effective teachers.
- Principals should have to demonstrate leadership practices and complete a performance task before being hired.

Base program re-approvals on the evaluation of outcomes

- In addition to placement data, program re-approval should be based on graduates' proven impact supporting and improving instruction and raising student achievement.

Who is doing this well?

Rhode Island has adopted research-based standards and requires preparation programs to incorporate them, tracks graduate supply, and allows for a variety of university- and non-university-based providers. Rhode Island principal preparation programs are also required to collect outcome data for graduates, and principals must demonstrate effectiveness for license renewal.

Beginning in 2010, *Illinois* raised its preparation program standards in order to address an oversupply of program graduates and relatively low program quality. After re-accrediting programs according to the new standards, the state has improved program quality and better aligned the supply of principal graduates with open positions.

Learn More

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Model spotlight

Bright New Leaders

Bright New Leaders is an alternative preparation program jointly developed by the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Business Roundtable, and the OSU Fisher College of Business. The program recruits proven leaders from a variety of fields through a highly selective process that includes multiple interviews and a leadership development assessment. Fellows train intensively under the mentorship of an accomplished principal and an executive-level business leader and complete an accelerated MBA program. Graduates commit to a two-year placement in a high-poverty, low-performing school. (brightohio.org)

Northeast Leadership Academy

North Carolina's Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) at N.C. State University is an intensive, research-based leadership development program serving a consortium of 13 school districts. The program is specifically designed to train principals for rural high-poverty, hard-to-staff, historically low-performing schools. Program Fellows are evaluated and assessed multiple times each semester. A key requirement is the completion of a yearlong principal residency with a mentor principal and an internship project through which Fellows identify a 'problem of practice' at their placement school and develop a strategy to address it. (nela2.wordpress.ncsu.edu/)