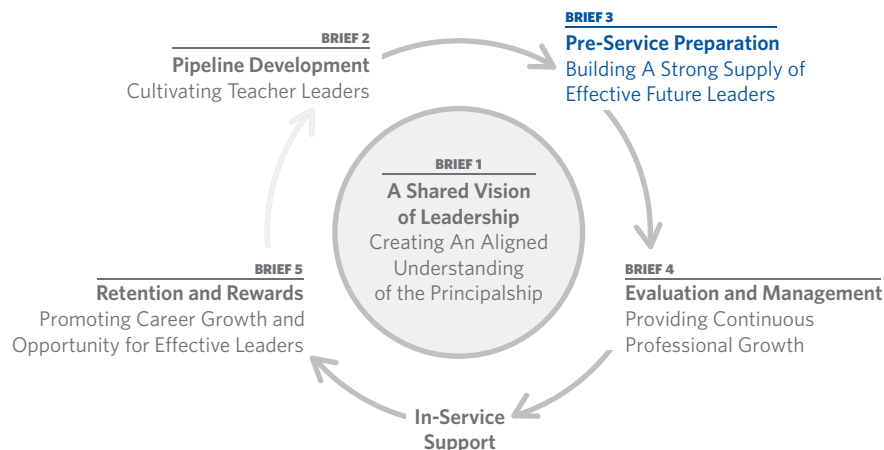


# PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION: BUILDING A STRONG SUPPLY OF EFFECTIVE FUTURE LEADERS

Accounting for a quarter of a school's impact on student achievement, principals are the leverage point for education reform and the primary drivers of school improvement. School leaders have a greater influence on all students than teachers and are the best long-term investment in effective teaching at scale.



## THE CHALLENGE: PRINCIPAL READINESS GAP

The current system of principal preparation needs to be overhauled. Changes to principal preparation will accelerate the pace of improvement and ensure all preparation programs are preparing the candidates we need to deliver on the promise of education reform. State licensure systems should also be revamped to ensure future principals demonstrate readiness before becoming school leaders and ongoing success to retain their licenses.

While we have an abundance of certified administrators, there is a shortage of principals prepared for the complex job of being a school leader. In fact, 41 percent of superintendents report that many principals are not well-prepared for the job<sup>1</sup> and 96 percent of principals said that on-the-job experiences were better training than their graduate programs.<sup>2</sup> There are a growing number of strong principal preparation programs that are exploring promising practices, including recruiting high-caliber candidates, conducting a rigorous selection process, pairing demanding curriculum with a strong practicum component, and using ongoing assessment to tailor learning.<sup>3</sup> However, most preparation programs still lack one or more of these critical elements. Compounding the challenge of inadequate preparation is the variability of state approval processes for principal preparation programs, many of which do not encourage improvement nor do they hold programs accountable for results.<sup>4</sup> State licensure systems often exacerbate this problem with their lack of focus on evidence of readiness for initial licensure and success on the job for renewal decisions.

The recommendations listed below focus on federal policy. For more information on these challenges and how states can prepare and license effective principals, please see New Leaders' publication entitled *Change Agents: How States Can Develop Effective School Leaders*.

## THE SOLUTION: A STRONG SUPPLY OF EFFECTIVE FUTURE LEADERS

In order to build a pipeline of school leaders ready to lead in this new era of reform, federal policymakers must:

- Support innovative approaches to principal preparation;
- Expect all preparation programs to offer rigorous courses of study with meaningful practice in an authentic setting; and
- Encourage states to adopt outcomes-based licensure systems.

### SUPPORT INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

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**I | Invest in innovative principal preparation.** Competitive grants can encourage the reform and creation of preparation programs that provide, either directly or through partnerships with local educational agencies (LEAs), the following research-based programmatic elements: a defined competency framework that describes the competencies a principal must have to be successful; proactive recruitment and rigorous selection; a research-based curriculum; clinical practice; participant assessment; and a commitment to program review and improvement.<sup>5</sup>

Vehicles:

- Increase **funding** for and initiate a **rulemaking** process on the **School Leadership program** (SLP) (Title II of ESEA). Focus the increased funding on both seeding promising principal preparation programs that specifically include research-based programmatic elements (described above) and scaling programs with evidence of results to serve as models for the rest of the country. (*Note: SLP is a competitive grant program that currently funds high-need LEAs to support the recruitment, training, and retention of school leaders.*)
- **Amend**, through authorizing statute or through **appropriations** language, Title II-A of ESEA to set aside a portion of funds for national activities, including funding for competitive grants to states and LEAs with cutting-edge strategies to improve principal preparation.
- **Amend** Title IV of HEA to explore new options for recognizing educator preparation programs. Establish a pilot to explore new approaches that raise expectations by allowing programs that are not based at institutions of higher education (IHE) and agree to meet a high bar gain accreditation or other recognition. In order to be eligible for the pilot, non-profit or other organizations (IHE-based or otherwise) must agree to implement research-based best practices and focus on outcomes, including an examination of graduate

There are a number of vehicles federal policymakers can use to create or encourage effective leadership policies. Throughout this series we will describe an ideal policy and then suggest potential vehicles policymakers could use to pursue that policy.

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#### Authorizing Statute

The legislative branch can amend current laws—such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or the Higher Education Act (HEA)—or pass new laws to establish programs and authorize federal spending levels.

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#### Appropriations Priorities

The legislative branch can set aside federal funds for a specific use and fund priority programs.

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#### Regulations

The executive branch can initiate a rulemaking process based on existing legislative language through an executive authority or regulatory agency.

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#### Executive Actions

The executive branch can provide guidance and technical assistance on problems of practice. And it can (along with the legislative branch) elevate concepts through the bully pulpit.

effectiveness and student learning outcomes. After piloting this approach with educator preparation programs, this innovative model could inform future HEA reauthorizations and the accreditation process generally.

- **Amend** the **Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program** (Title II-A of HEA) to fund partnerships among high-performing principal preparation programs (including IHEs and non-profit organizations) and high-need LEAs to create model principal preparation programs (specific recommendations described below). *(Note: TQP is a series of competitive grant programs that currently fund partnerships between IHEs and high-need LEAs to support improvements in educator preparation and support).*
  - **Amend** the Pre-Baccalaureate Preparation program (Title II-A of HEA) to fund teacher leader and principal preparation program reforms at the post-baccalaureate level. The grants should hold these programs accountable for preparing effective teacher leaders and principals and implementing research-based best practices tailored to school leadership. *(Note: The Pre-Baccalaureate Preparation program currently requires grantees to implement programmatic reforms and hold teacher preparation programs accountable for preparing highly-qualified teachers).*
  - **Amend** the Leadership Development program (Title II-A of HEA) to require that funds be used on best practices in program design and activities that build necessary leadership capacities. Require principal candidates to have at least two years of effective school-based experience (such as effectiveness as a teacher where data are available) either directly preceding the program or through prior experience. This will ensure that candidates have the needed instructional expertise while also allowing former teachers to be eligible. Add required uses of funds related to best practices in program design (including the research-based programmatic elements described above) and leadership competencies. To remove artificial barriers that keep some excellent leaders from becoming school principals, remove the requirement for attaining an advanced degree. *(Note: The Leadership Development program currently supports grantees in preparing superintendents, principals, or other school administrators).*
  - **Amend** the Teacher Residency program (Title II-A of HEA) to set aside a portion of funds to provide stipends to prospective school leaders to obtain principal training in exchange for agreeing to serve in a high-need school. *(Note: The Teacher Residency program currently provides stipends to recent college graduates and mid-career professionals to obtain graduate-level teacher training in exchange for a commitment to teach in a high-need school).*

**2 | Encourage states to be open to all forms of principal preparation.** All programs—whether based at LEAs, IHEs, or non-profit organizations—should be able to prepare principals as long as the programs include research-based programmatic elements and focus on outcomes. Currently 19 states only allow IHE-based programs to offer a pathway to the principalship,<sup>6</sup> artificially limiting the choices for principal preparation based on the category of program instead of its characteristics and outcomes.

Vehicle:

- **Amend** or initiate a **rulemaking** process to set eligibility criteria for various state-level grant competitions (e.g., the **Race to the Top Fund (RTT)**) such that states must have a system that is open to all forms of principal preparation programs as long as they meet a high bar for eligibility.

## EXPECT RIGOROUS PRINCIPAL PREPARATION AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

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**3 | Require greater transparency of results.** Ask states to collect and disaggregate methodologically sound and accurate outcome data<sup>7</sup> by principal preparation program, such as placement rates, retention rates, LEA satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and impact on student outcomes. While a number of states do not yet collect this data, we believe states should build or modify data systems that can track this information, especially leadership effectiveness and impact on student outcomes data, as many programs do not currently have the capacity or authorization to collect that data.

Vehicles:

- **Amend** Title II-A of HEA to add principal preparation programs to the annual state report card and institutional and program report cards. The outcomes measures that states collect on individual programs should be shared with programs in order to examine the data and make enhancements to program design, operation plan, and curriculum, as necessary.
- **Amend** or initiate a **rulemaking** process to set eligibility criteria for various state-level grant competitions such that states must collect and transparently report impact data (including the measures described above) disaggregated by principal preparation programs in order to be eligible.

**4 | Encourage states to hold all preparation programs accountable for results.** States should collect and report data on program results and use specified outcomes measures (described above) to differentiate their approach to a comprehensive system of program renewals as well as to inform program improvement. Programs with strong outcomes would be eligible for fast-track renewals and further study to determine replicable best practices. Programs with weaker outcomes would be subject to additional scrutiny and make plans for improvement. At the far end of the spectrum, programs that continue to produce the lowest-performing principals would be subject to consequences.

Vehicle:

- **Amend** Title II of ESEA to increase the state-level reservation of Title II-A funds and set aside at least half of the reservation specifically for principal effectiveness activities, including allowing states to use funds to design and implement a process for reviewing and approving principal preparation programs that is grounded in research-based programmatic elements and differentiated based on outcome data. For more information on how states can build an outcomes-based system, please see New Leaders' publication entitled *Change Agents: How States Can Develop Effective School Leaders*.

## SUPPORT OUTCOMES-BASED LICENSURE

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5 | **Invest in states that want to pilot new approaches to certification and licensure**, including differentiating between a preliminary license for new administrators and a professional license based on effectiveness.

Vehicles:

- **Amend** or initiate a **rulemaking** process to set eligibility criteria for various state-level grant competitions such that states must create a single license for entry into the principalship for candidates that completed any principal preparation program that met a high bar for program approval, be it a traditional or alternative program, in order to be eligible.
- **Amend** Title II-A of ESEA to set aside a portion of funds for national activities, including funding for competitive grants to states and LEAs with innovative strategies to reform principal licensure. Focus initial licensure on demonstrations of the competencies necessary to lead a school. Link renewal decisions to effectiveness data from robust principal evaluations systems that accurately and consistently differentiate principal performance based on a pattern of effectiveness over time. For more information on both the design and implementation of principal evaluation and support systems, please see the brief entitled “**Evaluation and Management: Continuous Professional Growth.**”
- **Fund** state or consortia development of rigorous, competency-based assessments for initial licensure. Require grantees to collect evidence demonstrating the instrument is predictive of effective principal practice.

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  7. For more guidance on how to address data challenges relevant to evaluating principal preparation programs, please see the following New Leaders commissioned report by the RAND Corporation. Wiseman, S. (2012). *Evaluating Efforts to Improve School Leadership: Challenges and Recommendations*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation. Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_briefs/2012/RAND\\_RB9686.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2012/RAND_RB9686.pdf).