



**Illinois Partnerships Advancing Rigorous Training (IL-PART) Project**  
**Grant Award: 10/1/13 - 9/30/18**  
[www.ilpart.org](http://www.ilpart.org)

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University a five year, \$4.6M School Leadership Program grant to support the Illinois Partnerships Advancing Rigorous Training (IL-PART) project. IL-PART represents a collaborative effort between high-need school districts and universities that have come together in formal partnerships aimed at improving the way in which principals are prepared and developed in Illinois.

IL-PART is comprised of 3 qualifying high-need district/university partnerships:

1. Aurora (East) District 131 and North Central College
2. Bloomington District 87 and Illinois State University
3. Quincy District 172 and Western Illinois University

The grant also partners with the Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education at Loyola University and the Catholic school diocese representing Aurora, Bloomington, and Quincy.

The consortium of partners focus efforts toward three clear goals:

- Goal 1: Prepare highly-effective school principals that positively impact student learning in high need schools;
- Goal 2: Develop sustainable and effective partnerships between university principal preparation programs and high-need districts designed to build district and school leadership capacity to improve school and student outcomes; and
- Goal 3: Disseminate IL-PART evaluation findings and emerging best practices in principal preparation and university/district partnership development.

### **Internship Requirements**

Illinois has been working at the forefront of innovation and improvement in principal quality for over a decade. Recognized for bold policy initiatives involving principal preparation, Illinois has received several national awards and recognitions.<sup>1</sup> One outcome of those efforts was the enactment of Illinois Public Act 96-0903 in 2010, which represents a substantial overhaul of leadership preparation requirements in the state, includes the following key elements:

- Established PreK-12 Principal Endorsement;

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<sup>1</sup> Illinois was the Education Commission of the States (ECS) recipient of the *2014 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation*. Nominated by the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), Illinois was recognized with this award for the collaborative efforts of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP). Illinois' work has been featured in a video titled, *A Bold Move to Better Prepare Principals: The Illinois Story* (<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/Series-Shows-How-Illinois-Successfully-Revamped-Requirements-for-Principal-Preparation.aspx>)

- Mandated formal partnerships between principal preparation programs and school districts in the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of the program;
- Established rigorous admissions criteria for candidates in principal endorsement programs;
- Mandated a year-long, performance-based internship with competency-based assessments;
- Established minimum qualifications and training requirements for mentor principals, faculty supervisors, and principal interns; and
- Required candidates pass an 8-hour exam administered by the state.

The IL-PART project was designed to capitalize on redesign efforts and deepen connections between universities and districts. Through participation in the IL-PART Project, partnering universities and districts have deepened their relationships and have begun to pilot an intensive full time internship model that provides a full semester of job embedded school leadership experiences designed to better prepare aspiring principals for the challenge of today’s schools. Candidates were given the choice between two internship models: intensive (including a full-time/full-semester component) and a traditional (part-time) internship experience. Both internships require the same assessments of leadership competencies.

Evaluators from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are exploring the differences between the two internship models by tracking outcomes during both the preparation (pre-service) and after graduates (in-service) are hired into principal positions. The pre-service phase of the evaluation (first three years of grant) studied program satisfaction and fidelity of implementation. The in-service phase (years 4 and 5) will study impact on student growth and other metrics involved in the principal performance evaluation.

### Outcomes To Date

**At the end of Project Year 3, the IL-PART project continues to outperform expectations.** When the project began, a principal preparation candidate enrollment target was set at **80 candidates** for the life of the grant. By the end of PY3, IL-PART partner programs have enrolled a total of **162 candidates**. These enrollments will grow as there are still two more years left on the grant with the goal to sustain the partnerships afterwards.

**By the end of PY3, 37 candidates have completed the principal preparation programs of which 13 candidates have been hired as principals or assistant principals.** Of those 13 hired as principals or assistant principals, 46% were hired in high-need districts. Of the remaining 24 graduates, 10 have been hired into other leadership positions (e.g. dean, curriculum director, athletic director, etc.), and 14 have remained in their teaching position. Interviews will be conducted this spring by the grant evaluator to determine why these graduates have not yet pursued principal or assistant principal positions (e.g., waiting for vacancy, etc.).

Additionally, partner districts (East Aurora, Quincy, and Bloomington) have exceeded expectations in both participation in IL-PART offered professional development and outcomes, including:

- 101 Principals & APs participating in IL-PART professional development (202% of target)
- 42 Principals trained & qualified as mentors eligible to host principal interns (167% of target)
- 100% of participating Principals & APs demonstrated positive student growth
- 100% of participating Principals & APs were rated highly effective or effective
- 86% of participating Principals & APs remained in high need districts

## Scale and Sustainability

This year, a key strategy of IL-PART will be to scale the intensive/full-time internships to other districts that are interested in replicating this practice with their own district funding. At a cost of about \$25,000 per internship, this is an effective and affordable strategy for districts to invest in, as it aligns to school leader succession planning.

In an effort to support scaling of this practice, various lessons learned have been documented by IL-PART:

- How to ensure the continuity and quality instruction with a long-term substitute;
- How to factor a semester of release time into the annual teacher performance evaluation process, so that an aspiring principal can complete an intensive internship;
- Impact of the state school code on the structure of the intensive internship model;
- How to align an investment in leadership preparation to the district's principal and assistant principal vacancy strategy;
- How can districts protect their investment in human capital; and
- How to minimize the impact of the Affordable Care Act on the cost of the internship.

In addition, documents have been created to message the internship model, cost out the substitute costs for districts, and retain candidates in the district after the release from their teaching duties.

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