

Ready to Be an Illinois Principal?






Guide to Principal Preparation Program Selection

Illinois has been operating at the forefront of innovation in school leadership preparation for over a decade, gaining national recognition from the *National Conference of State Legislators* and the *National Governors' Association*. Efforts in this area led the *Education Commission of the States* to select Illinois for the *2014 Frank Newman Award for State Policy Innovation* recognizing ISBE for the work around the new principal endorsement. The Illinois principal preparation program policy (enacted through Public Act 96-903) dramatically raises the bar in terms of the required leadership competencies a candidate must demonstrate in order to secure a credential to be a principal.

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LEADERSHIP MATTERS

-  Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Leithwood, K., et al. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Learning: Wallace Foundation*.
-  Highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year. Branch, G., Hanushek, E. and Rivkin, S. (2013). *School Leaders Matter. Education Next. Winter 2013. Vol. 13. No. 1*.
-  The principal's job has changed dramatically in recent years, especially the expectations around what effective principals must be able to do. They must know how to coach teachers to become better at instruction. They must create and maintain a school climate where all students and educators can flourish. And, increasingly, they need to know how to attend to the full array of children's needs, not just their academic ones. *Who's Ready to Be a Principal? Education Week. (2017) January 25, 2017. Vol. 36. Issue 19 Supplement.*

PRINCIPAL READY?

Whether you are a teacher or serve students in other ways, such as a counselor or speech therapist, you may have started to contemplate becoming a principal. The Illinois Performance Standards for School Leadership (below) describe the performance expectations for Illinois principals. After reviewing this information, reflect upon these questions to help you consider your readiness to obtain a school leadership role or begin a principal preparation program:

- *Do I have the passion to lead others in service to children and education?*
- *Have I been successful in establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships?*
- *Have I participated in leadership opportunities such as curriculum development or school improvement?*
- *Have I developed expertise related to instruction to meet the expectations of the standards?*
- *How have I implemented and managed systems of change with stakeholders?*
- *What experiences have I had in utilizing multiple measures of data to improve teaching and learning?*

LEADING IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders serve as a framework to guide principal practices. These standards are also the foundation for the evaluation process for school administrators. Principals are evaluated on these professional standards, along with student growth.

ILLINOIS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



I. Living a Mission and Vision Focused on Results



II. Leading and Managing Systems of Change



III. Improving Teaching and Learning



IV. Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships



V. Leading with Integrity and Professionalism



VI. Creating and Sustaining a Culture of High Expectations

Learn More About the Standards

[Illinois Performance Standards for School Leadership](#)

CONSIDERING A PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAM?

QUALITY SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

University Faculty



High quality programs include faculty members knowledgeable in particular fields of expertise AND practitioners.

*How many courses are taught by current or former effective principals?
What is the student/faculty ratio?*

Recruitment/Selection



Illinois Principal Prep programs are expected to produce evidence of selectivity in admission of candidates to assure a capable and diverse pool of candidates.

Does admission criteria to identify intentional actions to screen and select candidates with instructional knowledge and leadership capacity?

Accessible Program Scheduling



Programs seeking to consider the unique needs of aspiring principals offer flexible structure to coursework.

*How does the program adapt scheduling for participants who continue to teach full time?
Are courses on set days each semester or on weekends?
What role does technology play in instructional delivery?
What percent of coursework is conducted online?*

Curriculum



Quality programs emphasize skills needed to be instructional leaders and change agents, enabling candidates to practice job skills. Quality is further realized when internship/job competencies are embedded in coursework.

Request to see the alignment between performance standards, coursework, and internship requirements.

Clinical/Internship Experiences



Candidates should have intensive clinical experiences with diverse populations providing extended opportunity to engage in instructional leadership and reflective practice experiences.

*What are the demographics in internship placements?
How are mentors selected and trained?
What level of university support is provided during the internship?
What assistance is given to candidates in selecting internship placements?*

Career Support



A quality program offers candidates the support of mentors who have evidence demonstrating their success as an educational leaders.

Does the program provide post-graduation support for interviewing and job search, networking opportunities, and continued support for early career principals?

Additional Considerations

Length of Program

What is the expected length of time from the start of coursework to the end of the internship? How many nights a week or month are classes conducted? What percentage of courses are conducted online?

Cost of Program

How many credit hours completes the program? What is the cost per credit hour? Does the department offer scholarships or credit vouchers? Is financial support available for full-time internships?

The information above was adapted from:

Improving University Principal Preparation Programs: Five Themes From the Field. The Wallace Foundation. 2016.

A Deeper Look: INSPiRE Data Demonstrates Quality in Educational Leadership Preparation. University Council for Educational Administration. 2017.

Why all this Attention to Illinois School Leader Preparation? The Center for Urban Educational Leadership. University of Illinois Chicago. 2014.

The Making of the Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training. The Wallace Foundation. 2012. Illinois School Leader Task Force: Report to the Illinois General Assembly. 2008.

INTERNSHIPS MATTER

The Importance of an Authentic Experience

When considering principal preparation programs or seeking additional leadership opportunities, these Illinois internship requirement summaries may serve as a guide. The internship should be strategic and provide candidates with an authentic experience, designed to prepare aspiring principals to be "school-ready".

Individuals who may be interested in applying for an administrative position should reflect upon their leadership experiences and seek alignment to these internship requirements. The current demands of a school leader have increased and changed, along with the principal preparation internship requirements. In Illinois, the internship has shifted from an hour-based requirement model to a competency-based model, which requires candidates to lead 80% of required competencies. Aspiring principals, should seek leadership opportunities or principal preparation programs aligned to these internship requirements and the Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders.



ILLINOIS PRINCIPAL LICENSE REQUIREMENTS



Illinois: A Leader Among the States



Illinois became the first state in the nation to create a specific endorsement for the lead role across Pre-K through 12th grade.



Illinois is one of only two states that use the five "high leverage" criteria when approving principal-preparation programs, according to the University Council for Educational Administration:

- Rigorous selection process
- University-district partnerships
- Clinically rich internship experience
- State program oversight
- An experience requirement for prospective candidates

ILLINOIS ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

Aurora University	National-Louis University
Benedictine University	North Central College
Bradley University	North Park University
Chicago State University	Northeastern Illinois University
Concordia University	Northern Illinois University
DePaul University	Roosevelt University
Dominican University	Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Eastern Illinois University	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Governors State University	St. Xavier University
Illinois State University	University of Illinois Champaign
Lewis University	University of Illinois Chicago
Loyola University	University of Illinois Springfield
McKendree College	University of St. Francis
New Leaders for New Schools	Western Illinois University

Prior to the enactment of the 2010 revised statute and rules, there were 31 programs providing preparation leading to the Type 75 – General Administrative certificate. According to ISBE, as of February 2016, 28 principal preparation programs have been approved by the state.

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