

2021 ILLINOIS EDUCATOR SHORTAGE SURVEY

Preventing A Mass Exodus: Reimagining the Role of the Principal and Supports Needed

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NOW HIRING



PREVENTING A MASS EXODUS:

REIMAGINING THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AND SUPPORTS NEEDED

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INTRODUCTION

School leadership has been identified as a key strategy to addressing teacher shortages, retention, and school conditions³, all priority issues right now with educator shortage concerns prior to but now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. **It is clear that the teacher shortage cannot be addressed without a focus on principal quality and a pending leadership shortage in the state magnifies workforce challenges.** Educator burnout is a real challenge right now⁴, the result of which is making a pending principal shortage more of a reality and priority. This white paper will unpack data from the 2021 Illinois Association for Regional Superintendent of Schools (IARSS) Educator Shortage Survey and other state and national data to examine the leadership shortage in the state. Priorities for the state and districts to tackle are also provided.

SURVEY RESULTS

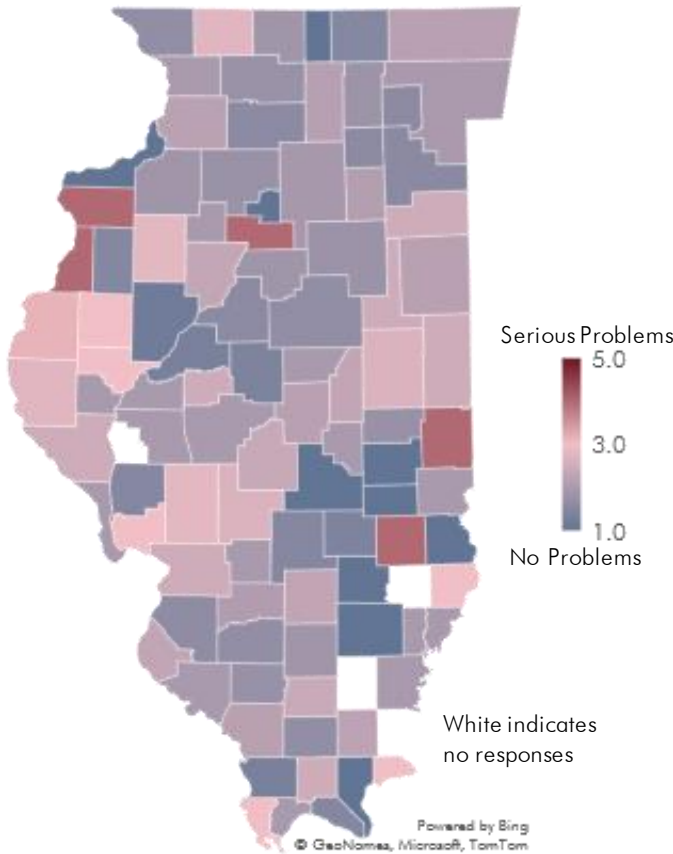
The Educator Shortage Survey was distributed by IARSS during fall 2021, the fifth year of this annual survey. The survey collects the data to take an annual pulse and studies trends in shortages of teachers, substitute teachers, and building leaders in Illinois' P-12 schools. This year, 663 district superintendents responded to the survey out of 853 who were invited. These superintendents represent 78% of the public schools in Illinois. Major findings from the survey include,

- 35% (n=232) of superintendents that completed this year's survey reported that they had a minor to serious problem with administrator shortages.
- 32% (n=212) of superintendents said that the availability of administrator applicants is worse compared to past years.
- 95% (n=629) of superintendents reported fewer applicants for open positions.
- 54% (n=358) of superintendents believed they will have a minor to serious problem with administrator shortage next year.

GEOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES IN PRICIPAL SHORTAGES

While it is clear that fears are real regarding the growing number of principal vacancies or anticipated vacancies, the survey findings suggest that at the time in which the survey was administered in September 2021, principal shortages were occurring in specific pockets across the state. Figure 1 presents a color-coded map of the state to determine what areas are reporting the hardest to staff areas for school leadership as reported in the IARSS survey.

Figure 1. Hardest to Staff Areas for Administrators in Illinois.



The color coding of the map represents blue as the areas experiencing least to no shortages and dark red as the areas experiencing serious problems with administrator shortages. Lighter red or light purple-colored areas representing mid-range between no shortage problems and serious problems. White colored areas are areas of the state in which the superintendent did not respond to the IARRS survey, so we do not know what their status is for the administrator shortage. As you can see from the map, few areas depict the deep red color. Similarly, few areas depict the deep blue color. Most areas of the state are shaded in a light red or purple color indicating that at the time of data collection, there was not a severe shortage of administrators. However, this does not account for the burnout that leaders are feeling that could lead to high attrition after this school year.

PRINCIPAL ATTRITION

Results of the qualitative responses from the IARRS survey indicate that the highest

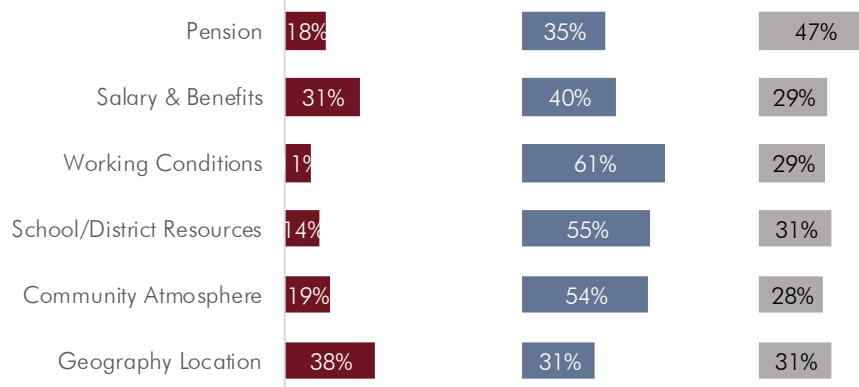
numbers of principal leavers will be from burnout, much of this caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A superintendent from southwest Illinois remarked that “COVID is causing extra stress for administrators and causing some to retire or leave the profession early”. According to another superintendent, “As a second-year superintendent, I can’t foresee anyone staying with the job for an extended period of time. It’s only the second week of September and my team is already completely exhausted”.

The survey findings also suggest that middle and high school principal positions are harder to fill than elementary. According to a northeast superintendent, “The candidate pool for PreK -5 administrators is much larger than for 6-12 administrators.” Another superintendent noted, “It is very hard to find quality middle school principals. The turnover is high for these positions”.

PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT

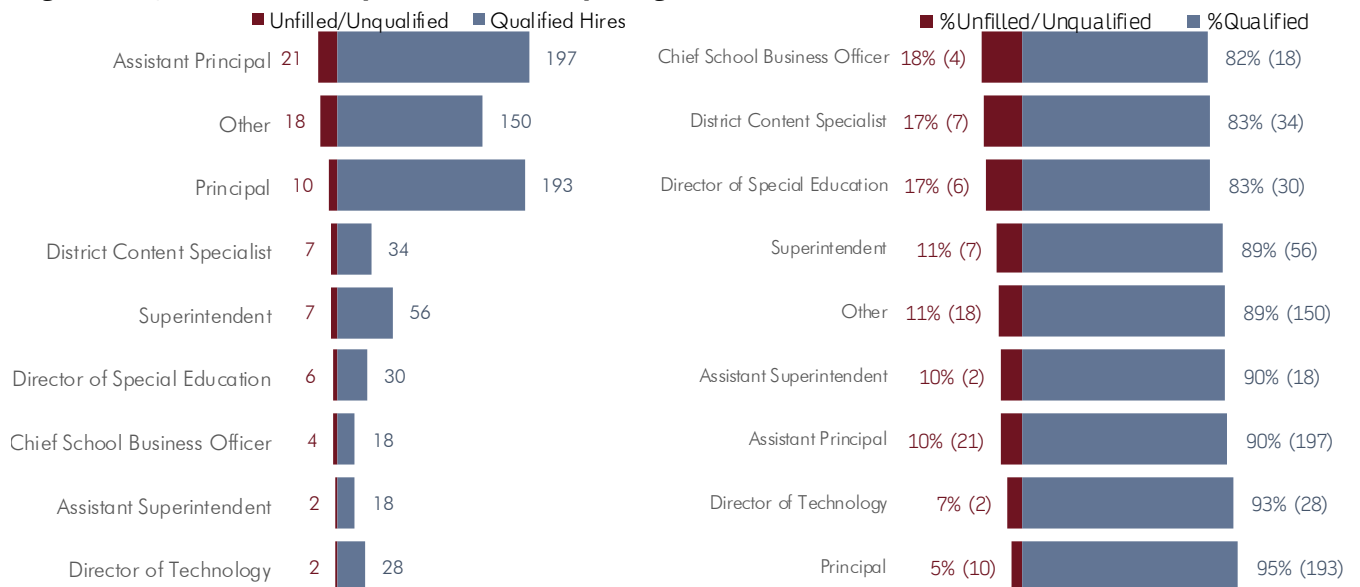
According to survey responses, retirements and resignations were the top reasons reported by superintendents for open administrative positions. As Figure 2 shows, geographic location had a negative impact on the ability for districts to recruit administrators followed by salary and benefits. The factor that most positively impacts recruitment, according to the superintendents who completed the survey, is positive working condition. Pension does not impact administrator recruitment.

Figure 2. Factors That *Negatively, Positively or Neutrally* Impact Recruitment.



To gauge how districts are staffing this year, the survey asked superintendents how positions they posted were filled for the 2021-22 school year (see Figure 3). For open leadership positions, 77 remained unfilled or filled with less than qualified applicants. The Assistant Principalship had the largest number of unfilled/unqualified positions (n=21). Chief School Business Officer had the highest percentage of unfilled/unqualified positions at 18% (4/22). The survey responses reported 18 unfilled/ unqualified positions in more general categories, such as instructional coach, dean of students.

Figure 3. Qualified and Unqualified Leader Openings.



35% (n=232) of superintendents reported applicants as poor quality. What is not known is if the applicants are poor quality because their preparation program is not adequately preparing them for the job or if not as many high-quality candidates are seeking jobs as school administrators. This is something worth examining.

The IARSS survey results present a snapshot of district hiring needs and challenges for administrators in fall 2021. This next section presents historical and current state and national data and information on the principal pipeline to dive deeper into this issue and point us in the direction for better priorities for solutions.

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE PRINCIPAL PIPELINE IN ILLINOIS

To determine if the current leadership pipeline is robust enough to fulfill projected vacancies, this section presents a historical look at principal certification in Illinois as well as the current enrollments and completion of candidates in principal preparation programs across the state.

According to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) data, 28,287 educators currently have an active Type 75 certificate/Principal Endorsement and are qualified to serve as administrators.⁵ An additional 13,662 educators have been awarded a Type 75/Principal Endorsement but are not active in ISBE’s licensure database. While this seems like enough educators to fill vacancies, there is a mismatch between who is licensed to lead and who actually wants to lead. In an effort to address this, Illinois passed legislation⁶ in 2011 that created a separate endorsement for principals and assistant principals designed to meet the certification needs only for school leaders. At the same time, the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) removed the requirement that anyone with responsibilities for evaluating staff to hold a general administrative endorsement (Type 75 certificate). Instead, they just needed to take and pass the state developed teacher evaluation training. These two bills generally phased out the General Administrative Endorsement (Type 75 certificate) and provided districts with flexibility on requirements they wanted for more general administrative positions like deans, department chairs, athletic directors, and special education. To appeal to the teacher population looking for leadership pathways, legislation passed⁷ creating Teacher Leadership Programs at universities.

Principal preparations experienced a dramatic drop in enrollment between 2014 and 2015, when licensure requirements changed. With program enrollments intentionally decreased to focus programs on only serving aspiring principal and assistant principals, a key priority needs to remain on assuring that those in Principal Endorsement programs are adequate to fulfill current school leadership demand for principals and assistant principals. Figure 4⁸ shows the number of principal preparation completers between 2011-2020.

Figure 4. Number of Principal Preparation Completers in Illinois 2011 - 2020⁸

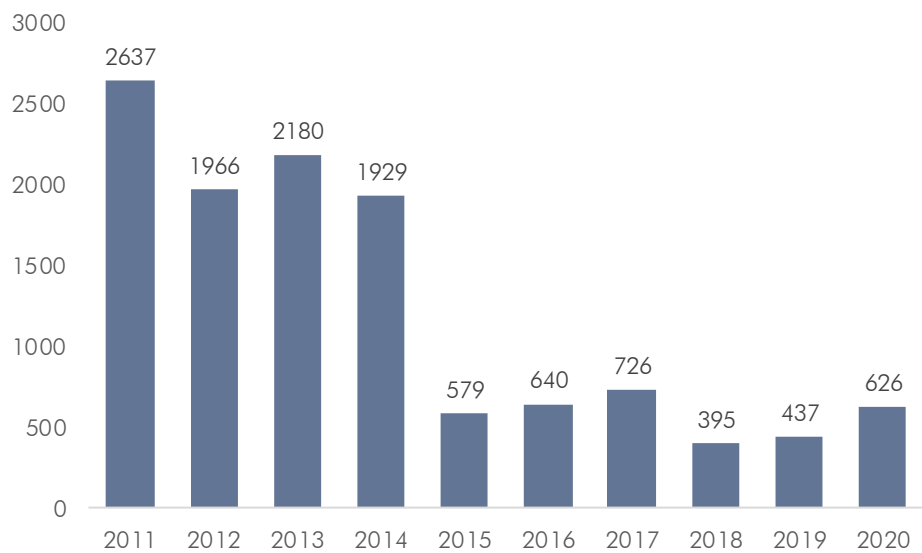


Figure 5⁸ shows the demographic make-up of the 1188 principal preparation candidates currently enrolled statewide in principal endorsement programs⁹.

Figure 5. Active Principal Preparation Candidates⁸

	Active 2020		New Candidates 2020		Total Prep Candidate	
White	279	69%	539	68.8%	818	68.9%
Black	47	11.6%	108	13.8%	155	13.1%
Latinx	38	9.4%	61	7.8%	99	8.3%
Other	40	10%	76	9.7%	116	9.7%
Total	404	100%	784	100%	1,188	100%

By design, the new Principal Endorsement Programs were intended to serve smaller cohorts of educators interested only in school leadership positions (principal or assistant principal). Principal Endorsement programs are now laser-focused on preparing candidates for the realities and

responsibilities of building principals. The smaller programs were also designed to provide a more realistic sense of how many of these principal candidates truly want to enter the principal pipeline by pursuing assistant principal or principal

positions once they complete the program. Rather than focus on the quantity of candidates in principal preparation programs which may or may not give an overinflated sense of the number of potential leaders who are actively pursuing principal positions, we recommend the state focus more on the following,

1. Are the number of candidates in principal endorsement programs, who have a true intent to pursue a principal or assistant principal position, adequate to meet projected vacancies?
2. Is there an adequate supply of principal/assistant principal candidates by region to fill projected vacancies? If some regions of the state are being under-served, what can be done to build their bench of candidates?
3. What percentage of candidates in preparation programs enter programs with the intent to pursue a school leadership position but then change their mind? What are the reasons for that change of mind, and what can districts improve so that the principalship is more attractive?
4. What do the demographics of candidates in preparation programs look like and do those demographics mirror our student demographics?

Meeting the demand of leadership positions in districts is much more complex than just increasing the number of candidates in principal preparation programs, especially if candidates completing programs do not pursue a leadership position in hard to staff districts or pursue a school leadership position at all. This gives a false sense of the pipeline, which was the case with the old Type 75 certificate. This next section will break down leadership projections and current trends in the state.

COMPLEXITIES OF LEADERSHIP SUPPLY AND DEMAND DATA

During the 2021-2022 school year, there were 356 principal vacancies filled throughout the state and an estimated 450 assistant principal vacancies filled.¹⁰ While the current enrollment numbers in principal endorsement programs (n= 1188 principal candidates) appears adequate to meet the supply of 800 leadership vacancies from last year, what we do not know is whether these candidates intend to apply for principal or assistant principal positions upon completion of their programs. ISBE and most individual principal preparation programs currently do not collect data on how many program completers apply for and secure school leadership positions upon completion of their program. However, as a benchmark, a historic supply practice by ISBE has been to estimate the need for approximately 350-400 school leaders a year.

While the current enrollment numbers in principal endorsement programs (n= 1188 principal candidates) appears adequate to meet the supply of 350-400 leadership vacancies a year, what we do not know is whether these candidates intend to apply for principal or assistant principal positions upon completion of their programs. ISBE and most individual principal preparation programs currently do not collect data on how many program completers apply for and secure school leadership positions upon completion of their program.

Additionally, many hard to staff schools are located in isolated geographic areas around the state and current data tracking by ISBE or by universities do not track the geographic catchment areas where principal candidates currently work (and are therefore more likely to apply for leadership positions). According to this year's IARSS survey findings, geographic location was the predominate reason impacting the ability for districts to recruit administrators followed by salary and benefits (which are often lower in smaller and rural districts). Despite this being a problem, there is still great geographic disparities between areas hardest to staff in the state and nearest principal preparation programs. This calls attention for principal preparation programs to consider offering principal cohort programs in regions of the state with hardest to staff schools.

Another area of concern among the current leadership pipeline is the disparity of demographics between Illinois students and Illinois school and district leaders. Recent data¹¹ shows the following,

- 27% of Illinois students are Latinx, while 6% of principals and 1% of superintendents are Latinx (2021).
 - When looking at schools outside of Chicago, 22% of the student population is Latinx, while only 3% of principals are Latinx.
- 17% of Illinois students are Black while 14% of principals and 6% of superintendents are Black (2021).
 - When looking at schools outside of Chicago, 12% of Illinois students are Black while 9% of principals are Black.
- 50% of Illinois students are girls, while 54% of principals are women but only 26% of superintendents are women (2021).
- 13% of Illinois students primarily speak a language other than English at home (2020) and in districts where a higher percentage of students speak multiple languages, it becomes even more valuable to have leaders who do too.

WORKING CONDITIONS: A LONGSTANDING PROBLEM THAT IS GETTING THE ATTENTION IT NEEDS

The big elephant in the room is uncertainty as to how many principals or assistant principals will leave their jobs this year. A recent statement from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) warns that the pandemic and the current political environment could result in a “mass exodus of principals”.¹² This warning is based on results of their 2021 survey that showed that:

- Only 35% of principals “strongly agree” with being generally satisfied with their role as principal (NASSP, December 8, 2021). This is a significant drop from the 63% of principals who marked “strongly agree” in the NASSP 2019 survey (NASSP, 2019).
- Of the principal respondents, 13% “strongly agree” that the stress of serving as a principal is not worth it (NASSP, 2021)
- Finally, 28% of respondents marked “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they plan to leave the principalship as soon as they can (NASSP, 2021).

While increasing the pipeline is a real need, a larger and more immediate priority seems to be on creating better working conditions for existing leaders to prevent them from leaving their school or the field all together.¹³ Concerns over the working conditions and unattainable work of the school principal has been problematic well before the pandemic. Nationally, the average tenure of a principal is about four years with nearly one in five principals (around 18%) turning over each year. According to the Illinois School Report Card (2021), the state has an average of two principals in each school over a six-year period. While the principalship has always been a tough job requiring an average of 60 hours of work per week,¹⁴ a recent report conducted by AIR/West Ed in partnership with National Association of Elementary School Principals¹⁵ found that in addition to the typical principal responsibilities, two new roles emerged from the pandemic:

1. Crisis management and the management of change through uncertain, emergency conditions; and,
2. Communication management with families and communities within a highly politicized environment.

The longevity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the expanding work placed on school leaders require addressing not just the principal shortage, but also attending to the principal role, creating stronger working conditions for school leaders in schools, and creating a targeted and strategic pipeline of candidates capable and willing to step into the most high-need schools and regions of the state. The remainder of this white paper addresses some targeted priorities listed in order of urgency.

Priority 1: Invest in Strategies to Support Current School Leaders and Keep Them in Positions

Similar to the NASSP survey results, results of the IARRS survey indicate that the highest numbers of principal leavers will be from burnout. We recommend that state agencies and school districts investigate ways to provide needed support to the current pool of school leaders across the state in an effort to help them stay in their positions. Some strategies worth considering include:

STATE STRATEGIES

- Increasing funding for New Principal Mentoring programs. Through use of ESSERs funding, ISBE allocated \$1.2 million in funding for New Principal Mentoring. We need to assure that funding does not dissipate when federal funds end. Instead, we should advocate for an annual appropriation at an increased amount that is enough to support all new principals in the state with mentoring and induction supports for their first two years on the job.
- Invest in strategies to support the development and training of teacher leaders throughout the state, whether through micro-credentialing or graduate programs. Create articulation between Teacher Leadership Endorsement and Principal Endorsement programs to allow seamless career pathways to leadership at points of interest and intent.
- Explore differentiated challenges faced by leaders of color that may prevent them from staying in their current position and in the profession and identify/enact strategies to address these challenges. Connect school and district leaders of color to statewide or regional organizations that serve educators of color.

DISTRICT STRATEGIES

- Revamp the role of the school principal to address how the role has evolved and to prevent burn-out. Strategies to reconfigure the role of school leaders should account for building distributed leadership supports across the school that alleviate the increasing work load being placed on the school leader and strategies that engage teachers with instructional decisions and solutions.
- Identify local strategies to strengthen and incentivize teacher leaders to engage in key roles and responsibilities that support distributed leadership structures in schools.
- Investigate whether middle and high schools carry higher workloads for leaders and what other roles/supports might be brought in to alleviate the burden. Compare staffing structures in middle and high schools with similar size and student demographics to determine appropriate administrative and student support staffing strategies and resources.

Priority 2: Target Preparation Efforts on Areas of Most Severe Shortages in State with Succession Planning Efforts

As reported by district superintendents in this IARSS survey, geographic location was the predominate reason impacting the ability for districts to recruit administrators. Some superintendents mentioned Grow Your Own strategies in the survey responses. According to a suburban Cook superintendent, “We have few turnovers in administrators. We host a leadership cohort for teacher leaders within the district. It is a Grow Your Own type model.” Another East Central Superintendent commented that, “We have tried to grow our own. We just promoted a teacher to principal, but we have no other teachers in our school with a 75 (certificate)”.

STATE STRATEGIES

- ISBE and Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) should prioritize funding strategies to principal preparation programs to target areas of the state experiencing the most severe shortages by assisting them with creating Grow Your Own principal cohort programs and succession planning strategies.
- ISBE and IBHE should consider strategies to scale innovative Grow Your Own models. Examples include:

- Northern Illinois University (NIU)/Rockford School District (RSD)/Illinois Principals Association (IPA) P-12 Principal Program – In 2020, NIU, RSD, and IPA launched an innovative partnership to develop school leaders to serve the needs of Rockford-area schools. The two-year, P-12 Principal Endorsement program is housed at NIU’s Department of Leadership, Education Psychology, and Foundations. The 36-semester hour graduate program includes a one-year internship that requires candidates to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through their course work. Candidates receive leadership coaching through a partnership with IPA.
- Regional Office of Education #17 is a recent recipient of a 5-year \$4 million federal Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. The funding will support the Learning While Leading (LWL) Project, designed to recruit and prepare educators who already have the principal license go into principal positions in hard to staff and rural schools in Illinois. Hard to staff schools will be identified using the IARSS survey data.

Priority 3: Consider Incentives to Attract More Candidates to School Leadership Positions

While geographic location was reported in the IARSS survey as the biggest challenge to recruiting school leaders, this was followed by salary and benefits. A question on a 2020 survey to educators with a Type 75 principal certificate who were currently not in a leadership position (assistant principal or principalship) found that the stress of the job, lack of financial advantage to leave their current position, and the working conditions of the districts were primary reasons why they had not pursued a leadership position.¹⁶ In many cases, educators reported they would take a pay cut, or they did not feel that the pay was high enough compensation for the number of hours and stress associated with the job. Other respondents said they did not want to lose the protections of a tenured position by taking an administrative role. In a 2019 survey by NASSP and Learning Policy Institute (LPI),¹⁷ principal salary and financial obligations were cited as a key reason for principal departure as leaders indicated that they did not feel that they were fairly compensated for their efforts. Additionally, many reported student loan debt from their principal preparation program.

STATE STRATEGY

- Continue to fund the Principal Recruitment Grants. The NASSP/LPI report recommended offering financial packages to principals that alleviate financial burdens that they may have, including loan forgiveness programs. This year, the Illinois General Assembly funded ISBE’s request for a \$1.8 million state appropriation to support recruitment and preparation of diverse educators into principal positions in hard to staff schools. Funding for this year is allowable for up to 3 years (contingent on state appropriations) and can be used to cover tuition and fees for principal endorsement programs.

DISTRICT STRATEGY

- NASSP/LPI report recommended that districts conduct an analysis of principal and teacher salaries to determine if principal salary are keeping pace with teacher salaries. IARSS is conducting a study on the salary differential between teachers and principals across the state to identify geographic areas in the state in which compensation may present real disincentives to pursuing a principalship. Results from the study will be shared through IARSS upon completion.

Priority 4: Monitor Illinois' preparation programs and reward programs that target recruitment and prepare educators that go into leadership positions; recognize universities that make deep investments in their principal preparation programs

Understanding the significant influence that school leaders have on teaching and learning, we encourage the development and utilization of a statewide system for monitoring and recognizing university investments with their principal preparation programs.

STATE STRATEGIES

- ISBE should expand the work of the Illinois Educator Preparation Profile (IEPP) to include a data accountability system on state approved principal preparation programs. Data that can be collected and monitored by IEPP should include:
 - Number of faculty of color in principal preparation programs
 - Number of candidates of color
 - Placement of candidates as assistant principals or principals 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years after program completion (broken down by race and gender)
 - Placement of candidates in hard to staff schools and regions, including rural areas

IEPP should flag and report on principal preparation programs in the state that are enrollment driven but not placing candidates into principal and assistant principal positions.

- IBHE should utilize the state's new higher education funding formula to incentivize universities to invest in their education preparation programs. A new formula for higher education funding should consider the investments that universities are making to their educator preparation programs that align faculty demographics and compensation to the field. For example, the average salary for an Assistant Professor of Education in Illinois is \$54,960 compared to the average salary in Illinois for a school principal (\$113,464) and average salary for a district superintendent (\$171,221).¹⁸ For many university programs, faculty salaries are higher to align with salaries in the field (e.g., average salary in Illinois for an Assistant Professor of Business is \$97,800 and Assistant Professor of Law is \$107,659). However, this has not been the case in Education Administration programs where the salary gaps result in the majority of education administration faculty employed with the university after retiring from administration, many of whom serve as adjunct faculty. Aligning education administration faculty salaries to administrator salaries paid in the field could result in the attraction of mid-career school administrators finishing their career by preparing the next generation of school and district leaders. This option might be very appealing to current district and school administrators burned out by the job but still wanting to give back to the profession.

ENDNOTES

¹ Dr. Erika Hunt is co-Director in the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University. Hunt brings experience in state policy as a former staff member for Governor Jim Edgar. She serves on several state task forces and has served on the Governor's P-20 Council since 2009 as co-chair of P-20 Council Committee on Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness, which has worked on initiatives around building a diverse educator pipeline, teacher and principal preparation

accountability measures, and teacher leadership. Hunt currently directs three federal school leadership grants totaling over \$20 M. She also directed a \$6 million Wallace Foundation school leadership grant that resulted in key state policy changes, including redesign of all principal preparation programs under new program requirements. This work was recognized by the Education Commission of the States as the recipient of the 2014 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation . A book co-authored by Hunt and published by Routledge in April 2019, *Reforming Principal Preparation at the State Level: Perspectives on Policy Reform from Illinois*, documents the work. Hunt is also a small business owner of an early childhood center, which has grounded her policy and research with practical application.

² Dr. Lisa Hood, is co-Director in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to create seamless B-12 education and care systems at the state and local levels. A large focus of her work has been on the role of school and district leaders in creating aligned B-12 systems. Currently, Dr. Hood is leading a project that is developing a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood teachers with supporting resources and artifacts to develop leaders and teachers who understand developmentally appropriate practice and can connect these practices to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and teacher and leader evaluation and professional development. Dr. Hood also administers the B-3 Continuity Project that provides B-3 alignment supports to participating districts and programs in the Illinois Preschool Development Grant program. In the past, Dr. Hood was instrumental in redesigning Illinois state policies related to the preparation of early childhood teachers, principals, and superintendents and continues to support these policies through the work of state policy groups and in the development of resources and supports. Lisa earned a doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

³ Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute

⁴ According to a 2019 Education Week article, nationally “nearly half of new principals leave their schools after three years, and nearly 20 percent leave every year” (p. 4). According to the 2019 Illinois Report Card data, Illinois has had an average of 2 principals at the same school over the past 6 years.

⁵ There are currently 3,734 principals in Illinois. Of those principals, 16% (588 principals hold the Illinois P-12 Principal Endorsement). 3146 principals in the state (84%) hold the old Type 75 general administrative certificate.

⁶ Illinois Public Act 096-1039

⁷ Illinois School Code Section 25.32 Teacher Leader Endorsement

⁸ *Effective and Sustained Principals For Every Illinois Community*, Prepared by Illinois Principals Association, November 2021.

⁹ 2021 ISBE data

¹⁰ ISBE 2021 data

¹¹ Department of District and School Leadership, 2021; Public School Review, 2020; Kraft, 2020; Illinois Report Card Data (2020).

¹² <https://www.nassp.org/news/nassp-survey-signals-a-looming-mass-exodus-of-principals-from-schools/>

¹³ Data also shows that the principal is one of the primary reasons for teachers staying or leaving a school (or the profession all together) (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Minimizing support for school leaders impacts not only the principal shortage but also the teacher shortage.

¹⁴ NAESP, 2021

¹⁵ <https://www.naesp.org/resources/research-reports/leaders-we-need-now/evolution-of-the-principalship-leaders-explain-how-the-profession-is-changing-through-a-most-difficult-year/>

¹⁶ https://education.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/csep/Type_75_Survey_wp_12.15.2020.pdf

¹⁷ <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/nassp-understanding-addressing-principal-turnover-review-research-report>

¹⁸ www.salary.com