

SUMMARY
Preparing School Principals:
A National Perspective on Policy and Program Innovations

Document can be downloaded at:

<http://www.iel.org/pubs/preparingprincipals.pdf>

This report presents a snapshot of the national landscape of reform occurring within the two school leadership areas (licensure and administrator training and professional development) and highlights promising practices and approaches occurring throughout the nation. The report is structured to answer four primary policy questions.

- 1) How do state policies shape the talent pool?
 - All states but two (Michigan and South Dakota) require school administrators to be licensed.
 - To become a licensed administrator, most states require completion of a fixed number of credits in an approved preparation program, certification as a teacher and passage of a state certification exam.

- 2) What is the current condition of leadership preparation?
 - In a survey of school leaders conducted by Public Agenda, 69% of principals responded that traditional leadership preparation programs are “out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s schools”.
 - Many claim that the content in most principal preparation programs are too theoretical and unrelated to the demands that today’s principals face, that admission standards to principal preparation programs are too low, do not target women and minorities for inclusion, and fail to identify individuals interested in working in high need areas, that aspiring principals are not given enough real-world experiences while in these programs, and that significant partnerships between universities and school districts do not exist.

- 3) Why is change needed?
 - Today’s schools require a principal to fill a variety of roles – of instructional leader, community leader, and visionary leader -- but most importantly, it is essential that school leaders are equipped with the skills needed to effectively improve teaching and learning.
 - SREB, in its report *Good Principals are the Key to Successful Schools*, challenges states to establish leadership development systems that produce principals who: 1) understand which school and classroom practices improve student achievement; 2) know how to work with teachers to bring about positive change; 3) support teachers with carrying out instructional practices; and 4) can prepare accomplished teachers to become principals.

- 4) What are the options for action?
 - Examples of states initiating reform are given as well as recommendations. Some recommendations include: 1) policy levers should be part of a well-conceived plan rather than market driven; 2) policy adoption must be followed by an explicit plan for implementation; and, 3) state policymakers should play a key role with encouraging collaboration among competing institutions.

The report concludes with an overview of innovative preparation programs, including university-based principal preparation programs (e.g., Delta State University, East Tennessee State University, Wichita State University, Antioch McGregor University, University of California-Berkeley, Cleveland State University, and University of Central Arkansas), as well as preparation programs offered by school

districts (e.g., Dallas Independent School District and the University of North Texas, and, Holyoke Public School System and University of Massachusetts) and non-traditional providers (e.g., New Leaders for New Schools, and, the Principal Residency Network).

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