To offer recommendations which build or strengthen the capacity of aspiring and practicing leaders to lead high-performing schools.

In this age of increased accountability, research has taught us that school leaders are crucial to improving instruction and raising student achievement. In fact, The Wallace Foundation has found that school leadership “is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning.” Effective school leaders focus their work on the core issues of teaching and learning and school improvement. Many school districts face a severe shortage of educational leaders due to many factors, including retirement and principals choosing to leave the profession due to job pressures and lack of incentives. Additionally, many potential leaders are choosing not to apply for openings, thus creating a shallow applicant pool.
NASSP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Successful schools require leaders who can perform at optimum levels and who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet complex challenges.

NASSP has more than 40 years of experience in the development of leadership assessment and development centers and has integrated the best research and best practice on leadership development into workshops, training, and resources. NASSP’s Building Ranks offers specific recommendations, strategies, and multiple tools to principals, assistant principals, and leadership teams to assist them in leading learning and building culture to ultimately improve student performance.

In 2015 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), of which NASSP is a part, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed the new Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), formerly known as the ISLLC standards. These foundational principles for school leaders are designed to serve as a broad set of national guidelines that states can use as a model for developing or updating their own standards. PSEL provides guidance and insights about the traits, functions of work, and responsibilities of school leaders.

Aligned to the PSEL standards, the NPBEA also developed the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards. NELP provides greater specificity around performance expectations for beginning-level building and district leaders. These standards will be used to review educational leadership programs through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) advanced program review process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS

- Fully fund Title II, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) at its authorized level of $2.295 billion per year, which districts and schools rely on to invest in principal residencies, job-embedded and cohort-based professional learning, and mentorship opportunities for aspiring principals.
- Restore funding for the School Leadership Recruitment and Support Program found in Title II, Part B, of ESSA, to no less than $30 million per year for the recruitment, training, and development of effective principals.
- Support legislation to improve accountability for teacher and principal preparation programs.
- Expand the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants in Title II of the Higher Education Act to include residency programs for principals.
- Enact legislation to provide grant funding to State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies to create principal induction and mentorship programs.
Adopt the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and align principal evaluation and support systems to the standards.

Fund sustained leadership development to improve teaching that results in increased student achievement, including legislation funding local education agencies to create principal induction and mentorship programs.

Tie leadership development programs to the attainment of national, state, and local standards and student achievement.

Tie leadership development to meaningful assessment of leadership capacity including knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Diagnosing a leader’s strengths and improvement needs is required for meaningful professional development that results in changed behavior.

Provide principals with multiple opportunities to undertake the study of pedagogy and to refine their leadership and management skills directly tied to improving teaching and learning.

Remove age and seniority barriers to state licensure eligibility.

Align graduate level programs and courses with state and school district professional development programs.

Allocate districts funds annually for leadership development for every principal and assistant principal.

Allocate districts funds for training prospective principals and examine and implement “grow your own principal” programs.

Provide professional development activities that help beginning principals create professional learning communities in their schools.

Provide district funding and opportunities to engage principals and assistant principals in ongoing, sustained, job-embedded leadership development that focuses on knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will improve a principal’s or assistant principal’s ability to lead and manage middle level and high schools in an optimal fashion.

Provide training to enable beginning principals to involve parents, especially parents of limited English proficient and immigrant children, in their child’s education.

Provide training on how to understand and use data and assessments to improve and personalize classroom practice and student learning.

Provide beginning principals training in implementing schoolwide adolescent literacy and mathematical initiatives.

Develop and implement initiatives to promote retention of highly qualified principals, particularly within elementary, middle level, and high schools with a high percentage of low-achieving students, including programs that provide:
Principal mentoring from exemplary principals or superintendents.

Induction and support for principals during their first three years of employment as principals.

Incentives, including financial incentives, to principals who have a record of improving the academic achievement of all students, but particularly students from economically disadvantaged families, students from racial and ethnic minority groups, and students with disabilities.

Increase advocacy efforts at the federal, state, and local level to ensure funding and policy decisions meet the needs of their community, school, and professional growth as a leader.

Provide assistant principals and other emerging leaders with increased responsibilities and professional development that will adequately prepare them to lead schools.

Participate in evidence-based mentoring and residency programs.

Complete federal, state, and district staffing surveys to provide policymakers with a better understanding of current job demands and opportunities for improvement.