

February 15, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The undersigned organizations are writing to provide input regarding provisions pertaining to principals in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Collectively, our organizations represent the nation's preK-12 school leaders and other educators. We support an HEA Reauthorization that includes a focus on the recruitment, preparation, and support of principals and assistant principals to improve student achievement, develop effective teachers, and create positive school climates.

Research from the [Wallace Foundation](#) has proven that effective school leadership is second only to direct classroom instruction as a factor in raising student achievement. In addition to administrative duties, principals fulfill an important instructional leadership role. To lead a school effectively, today's principal must create the learning conditions that support quality teaching and learning. To do this, principals are in classrooms, observing and evaluating instruction, engaging with teachers in lesson planning, and connecting teachers and content coaches with appropriate professional learning opportunities. This expanded role means principals are significant multipliers of effective teaching and are well positioned to boost student achievement.

Given the unique role that principals play in ensuring that our nation's students have a high-quality learning experience through high school in order to be college and career ready, school leaders must be afforded the best opportunities for professional learning and support as they work to improve teaching and learning in all schools. Yet all too often principals and assistant principals enter the profession without having received the foundational instructional leadership skills needed for success, as training and professional development programs have not kept pace with the dynamic and complex role of the principalship.

Professional Standards for Educational Leadership

To address this issue, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration endorsed a new set of standards for school leaders in 2015 and have since encouraged states to adopt those standards. Called the [Professional Standards for Educational Leadership](#) (PSEL), the new standards incorporate the latest research indicating what students need to become successful learners and what school leaders can do to create more a more effective learning environment. They set broad expectations for the preparation, practice, professional learning, and evaluation of school leaders.

To date, ten states (AZ, DE, HI, ID, MD, MO, NJ, NY, VT & WA) have adopted or adapted PSEL as their principal certification and licensure standards and more states are considering to do so as they focus on high quality school leadership as part of the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. In addition, National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards, which are aligned to PSEL, will soon be released and will guide principal preparation program design, accreditation review, and state program approval. The NELP standards will specify what novice leaders and program graduates should know and be able to do.

Principal Shortage

Another issue of concern is the growing shortage of qualified school leaders to serve in principal or assistant principal positions in our nation's schools. According to the [Institute for Education Statistics](#), one in five principals working in schools in the 2011-12 school year left their school by the 2012-13 school year. School leaders who are retiring, transferring schools, or pursuing new opportunities within the education sector are not being replaced by enough qualified candidates. As a result, many school districts across the country report principal vacancies and a serious lack of qualified applicants to replace them.

The demand for employment of elementary, middle, and high school principals will grow 6 percent nationwide by the year 2022 due to population increases. This surge in demand will increase the financial burden on districts since the cost to recruit, hire, prepare, mentor, and train principals costs urban school districts on average \$75,000 per principal.

Principals' Role in Alleviating Teacher Shortages

Research released by the [Learning Policy Institute](#) (LPI) in 2016 points to a growing teacher shortage nationwide that is "reaching crisis proportions" in some fields and locations. According to the [Education Commission of the States](#), urban, rural, high-poverty, high-minority, and low-achieving schools face the most persistent staffing challenges. Middle and high schools, in particular, face challenges in filling positions in special education, math, science, foreign language, applied technology, and ESL. School leaders also report finding teachers of color, male teachers, and bilingual teachers, most representative of the communities they serve, to be extremely difficult. Although fewer people entered teacher preparation programs during the Great Recession, of greater concern is the number of teachers leaving the profession. LPI estimates that 19 to 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and the turnover is even greater in high-need schools.

While salaries, greater accountability and general working conditions contribute to teacher attrition, building level administrative support has a huge impact on a teacher's decision to leave or stay in a particular school. [An analysis of the 2012-13 Teacher Follow-up Survey by Richard Ingersoll at the University of Pennsylvania](#) found that 66 percent of teachers cited dissatisfaction with school administration as motivation for leaving their schools. LPI also conducted an analysis of the annual Schools and Staffing Survey and found that new teachers who had at least one semester of practice teaching were more than three times less likely to leave the profession after a year than those who had no practice teaching.

Suggestions for Provisions to be Included in HEA Reauthorization

Our organizations support the preservation of Title II of the Higher Education Act. For the reasons outlined above, we believe it is clear that there is a federal responsibility to ensuring that each child has access to well-prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.

As supporters of the Educator Preparation Reform Act (H.R. 3636), we encourage the Committee to clarify that the purpose of Title II, Part A is to improve quality and accountability for educator preparation programs.

Definitions

We encourage the Committee to use "*principals and other school leaders*" and rely on the definitions in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Definitions under **Teacher Quality Partnership** grants:

“Eligible Partnerships” should be expanded to include principal organizations. These entities may provide alternative routes to State certification for teachers or principals.

We recommend the following as a definition of an *“Induction Program”* for principals:

- (i) programs are aligned to national and state standards reflecting research and professional knowledge concerning excellence in educational leadership.
- (ii) partnering with school districts provides a mutually beneficial relationship for universities and districts. Recruitment, selection, curriculum and program experiences are shaped to meet the pertinent problems of practice influencing partner districts and schools.
- (iii) diverse clinical experiences provide pre-service principals with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills within authentic practice settings.
- (iv) accommodation of an aspiring principals’ schedules and location allows them to attend classes in a way that respects the reality of working full time.
- (v) coursework that is primarily taught by highly qualified faculty provides students the opportunity to learn based on the field’s current research and practice. Pairing such instruction with relevant fieldwork can help students bridge theory and practice for school improvement.
- (vi) career support by having mentors and university instructors aid in individual as they serve in their first leadership roles.

In addition, to align the definition of *“Induction Program”* for principals to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, we recommend the following language:

The development of leadership skills and qualities that contribute to student academic success and well-being, including to--

- (i) develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values;
- (ii) act ethically and according to professional norms;
- (iii) strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices;
- (iv) develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- (v) cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community;
- (vi) develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel;
- (vii) foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff;
- (viii) engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways;
- (ix) manage school operations and resources; and
- (x) act as agents of continuous improvement.

The definition of *“Partner Institution”* should include leader preparation programs as well.

Possible language could be: “an institution of higher education which may include a 2-year institution of higher education offering a dual program with a 4-year institution of higher education, participating in an eligible partnership that has a teacher and/or leader preparation program.”

The definition of *“Profession Ready”* with respect to a principal, means a principal who has an advanced degree, or other appropriate credential and a demonstrated record of success as a teacher. Our organizations firmly believe that prospective school leaders must have prior classroom experience before entering a principal preparation program. Individuals with strong instructional backgrounds are better able to relate to and lead teachers, and more equipped to identify and model effective classroom practices.

We recommend that the Committee cross-reference the definition of “*School Leader Residency Program*” that was included in the Every Student Succeeds Act:

The term *School Leader Residency Program*” means a school-based principal or other school leader preparation program in which a prospective principal or other school leader:

- A. For 1 academic year, engages in sustained and rigorous clinical learning with substantial leadership responsibilities and an opportunity to practice and be evaluated in an authentic school setting; and
- B. During that academic year-
 - a. Participates in evidence-based coursework to the extent the State (in consultation with local educational agencies in the State) determines that such evidence is reasonably available, that is integrated with the clinical residency experience; and
 - b. Receives ongoing support from a mentor principal or other school leader, who is effective.

Partnership Grants for the Development of Principal Residency Programs

Our organizations strongly supported the *School Principal Recruitment and Training Act* as incorporated into the Every Student Succeeds Act. However, this legislation was introduced prior to endorsement of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in 2015. Thus, we encourage the Committee to revise the criteria for the selection of mentor principals to align to PSEL. Specifically, the language should state:

- (i) Demonstrating awareness of, and having experience with, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to--
 - (I) develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values;
 - (II) act ethically and according to professional norms;
 - (III) strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices;
 - (IV) develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
 - (V) cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community;
 - (VI) develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel;
 - (VII) foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff;
 - (VIII) engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways;
 - (IX) manage school operations and resources; and
 - (X) act as agents of continuous improvement.

In addition, the PSEL standards should apply to all internship and residency programs. For that reason, we suggest that all internship and residency programs should provide candidates:

- (i) with a variety of coherent, authentic, field and or clinical internship experiences within multiple school environments that afford opportunities to interact with stakeholders and synthesize and apply the content knowledge and develop and refine the professional skills articulated in each of the components included in NELP Building-Level Program Standards;
- (ii) a minimum of six-months of concentrated (10-15 hours per week) internship or clinical experiences that include authentic leadership activities within a school setting;

(iii) a mentor who has demonstrated effectiveness as an educational leader within a building setting; is present for a significant portion of the internship; is selected collaboratively by the intern, a representative of the school and/or district, and program faculty; and is provided with training by the supervising institution.

We encourage the Committee to incorporate language from H.R.3636, which would require principal residency programs to offer a one-year living stipend or salary to principal residents during their participation in the program. We also feel that these programs should be encouraged to provide a stipend to mentor principals who are helping to enhance their profession while also leading their own schools.

Becoming a principal requires a master's degree or higher in most states, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars on top of the debt that many educators have already incurred in their undergraduate programs. For this reason, many prospective school leaders pursue less daunting professions with higher salaries and a lower cost of entry. Research conducted by the American Institute of Research also suggests that schools paying below the mean salary for principals were almost 10 times more likely to lose their principal to another school than schools paying above the mean salary. This, coupled with the growing achievement gap in low-income communities, makes it vital to incentivize effective leaders to enter the school leadership field and remain at the schools that need them the most.

Partnership Grants for Educator Development

Any Partnership Grants for Educator Development should include professional development and training for teacher leaders, mentor teachers, and mentor principals.

TEACH Grants

Our organizations encourage the Committee to expand eligibility for TEACH grants to include principal candidates who are participating in a graduate degree program.

Federal Loan Forgiveness

As mentioned above, becoming a principal requires a master's degree or higher in most states, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars on top of the debt that many teachers have already incurred in their undergraduate programs. A [2014 policy brief by New America](#) found that the combined undergraduate and graduate debt for an individual pursuing a master of education was \$50,879 - higher than individuals earning a M.B.A. or a Master of Science degree. For this reason, our organizations recommend that eligibility for Loan Forgiveness for Teachers under the Higher Education Act be expanded to also include principals in order to incentivize school leaders to enter the profession, mitigate principal turnover, and help ensure that these professionals remain in high-need schools where they will have the greatest impact on student success.

Conclusion

Principals are directly responsible for recognizing and supporting teacher quality by creating high-functioning schools that allow teachers to excel and students to learn. A preponderance of evidence has made it clear that a great teacher makes a great classroom, but only a principal can lead a school's success and sustain long-term improvement efforts. To ensure successful outcomes for all students, reduce principal churn, and save districts money, Congress must address the high financial and academic costs of principal turnover in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this input and look forward to working with the Committee on this important legislation. For any questions about our comments, please reach out to Danny Carlson at dcarlson@naesp.org or (703) 518-6245.

American Federation of School Administrators

ASCD

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals