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Principal Concerns:
Leadership Data and Strategies for States

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CRPE
REINVENTING
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Executive Summary

Discussions about human capital and school improvement typically center on teachers, not administrators, and that's a mistake. Principals, who are responsible for selecting and developing the teachers we know are so important, are a critical driver of school success. So it is imperative that we do everything we can to find, deploy, and keep good principals.

Unfortunately, when it comes to cultivating school leaders, current state-level practices are, at best, haphazard. In the worst cases, they actually may be keeping talented people out of the job. States are only just beginning to address the weaknesses in their principal pipelines—and even then, they are not yet developing the strategic approaches necessary to truly improve the talent pool and improve student outcomes.

Some states have taken first steps toward improvement by tackling some issues around alternative paths and certification, but their plans are not comprehensive or driven by data, and there is still a long way to go. In addition, these piecemeal efforts may not result in a stronger principal labor market or get talented principals to the schools that need them the most. Instead, states need to first understand their circumstances. They need to analyze their principal data to identify their upcoming needs. Then they need to step back and look at a broader, comprehensive set of solutions that improve the job, attract the most promising candidates, and get these individuals into the places that need them the most.

With the interest and assistance of more than a dozen key state education leaders and staff from across the country, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) has been investigating what it would take for states to attract, deploy, and support a steady flow of talented school leaders.

The time to act is now. We need strong principals to carry out federal and state education reforms such as school turnaround efforts and teacher evaluation. Yet every state has a shortage of great leaders, and some states will see the shortage grow with looming retirements: In Iowa, for example, almost half of the 1,200 principals will be eligible to retire in the next five years. This is not true everywhere, however. In Indiana, the workforce is relatively younger, and 70 percent of principals are expected to still be there five years from now. These examples suggest that state action needs to be driven by data and strategy—targeted recruitment and improved preparation is the right focus for Iowa, while the workforce in Indiana would benefit from increased mentoring and on-the-job support. To help make these strategic decisions, states need to develop a principal pipeline based on what the data reveal and tailored to their distinct needs.

CRPE has created a set of materials that state policymakers can use as they get started in developing and supporting a principal corps for the coming decades. This report explains why principals are key to so many of today's education efforts and why now is the time to take action. Included in this report are a data guide and a framework for thinking about policies, which states can use as they get started. And over the next few months, CRPE will release a series of *Principal Concerns* briefs that provide state-level analyses of the principal workforce in several states. These briefs—which begin with a look at Iowa—will demonstrate how an informed understanding of the demographics of a state's school leadership corps can help policymakers proceed with improving it.

The *State Principal Data Guide* in this report tells policymakers what metrics they must track in order to make the best decisions regarding the supply and training of school leaders. By tracking upcoming vacancies, the quality and capacity of training programs, and which principals are likely to need support, the guide can help state officials strategically anticipate needs and meet them with both traditional and new approaches.

Once states collect and analyze the data, they can turn to a set of guiding principles that should drive policy. The *Principal Pipeline Framework* can help states prioritize and adopt an array of policies to attract and make the most of strong principal talent to support the needs identified in the data. The framework is structured around

three conditions that must be met for high-quality supply to meet demand. The first focus is **the right work:** The principalship must be designed as an attractive job that challenges and rewards capable people. Second is **the right people:** States must draw the most talented prospects to the field. Finally, **the right places:** The best, most determined leaders should have incentives to take on the most challenged schools.

The ultimate goal? To have every school led by an engaged leader who knows how to drive achievement and how to develop and retain talented teachers.

To meet this goal, state education leaders must:

1. Collect and analyze data to prioritize efforts.

With resources scarce, the *State Principal Data Guide* can help states be deliberate as they choose where to invest. States already collect some principal and school performance data; they now should merge those to track high- and low-achieving principals and look for trends by location and school level. Only when they know where their needs lie can states best define their priorities. States with impending retirements should plan how to recruit and prepare leaders, and those with a younger workforce should determine how to train and grow people already on the job to meet the demands.

2. Choose some high-impact options to start.

In combination with the state data analysis, the *Principal Pipeline Framework* offers a set of comprehensive policies for states to improve the job of principals, attract strong candidates, and target their placement. Some options are cost-free; some are high-impact and more expensive. Some policies will be easy to implement; others might be more challenging. Map out what can be done now, next year, and three years from now.

3. Collect and publicize data on preparation programs.

Most states don't know how many people graduate every year from principal preparation programs, where they work, or what impact they have on student achievement. Most states don't know where their best, or weakest, principals come from, because they don't link performance back to preparation programs. States must begin to collect this information to determine where to expand and where to withdraw, and to make the quality options known to prospective candidates.

4. Pilot new opportunities among the districts most ready to try new things.

New preparation options, alternative sources of leaders, new school leadership arrangements, and new job freedoms have the best chance of yielding results if they are implemented by those who want to try them. Pilot new ideas and measure the outcomes. Grow the ones that are working; stop those that aren't. Proof of good examples is the best way to promote and grow change.

5. Link principal policies to teacher policies.

Almost every state is legislating change with regard to teachers. Rarely do principal policies get included. States should make it a practice to attend to principal policy whenever they tackle teacher policy. Aside from not missing opportunities, it's important that school leader policies such as evaluation, accountability, and compensation align with teacher policies on those same issues.

With retirements on the horizon and strong leaders in short supply, states need to act now—and act thoughtfully—to ensure that schools, and students, have the excellent principals they need.

Introduction

Concerns about teacher effectiveness have taken center stage in debates about education policy. In response, a growing number of states and districts are fundamentally changing, or planning to change, the way teachers are prepared, paid, and evaluated.

There's no doubt that this focus on improving teacher effectiveness is critical for improving student outcomes. But too often discussions about human capital in schools overlook the people ultimately responsible for improving teacher and school effectiveness: principals.

A growing number of studies are providing evidence of what parents and teachers already know—effective principals are a key driver of school success. A seminal Wallace Foundation study found that, next to teachers, principals are the biggest influence on student outcomes, and leadership is particularly influential in schools where students are the neediest.[1] Likewise, a New Leaders for New Schools study found that principals account for 25 percent of a school's total impact on student achievement.[2]

Principals influence achievement by recruiting and keeping highly effective teachers and by identifying and moving out low-performing ones.[3] What sets apart principals with the most dramatic student growth gains is their ability to lead and manage other adults—surrounding themselves with other leaders who can support teachers, motivating and growing people, not shirking from difficult conversations with those who aren't performing well, and deciding when to remove low performers.[4] Doing this is a skill, one that is highly sought but increasingly hard to find. According to Mass Insight, a national organization that helps districts and states facilitate school turnarounds, the lack of a highly skilled leader is why so many turnarounds fail.[5]

Unfortunately, when it comes to cultivating school leaders, current state-level practices are, at best, haphazard. In the worst cases, they actually may be keeping talented people out of the job. States are only just beginning to address the weaknesses in their principal pipelines—and even then, they are not yet developing the strategic approaches necessary to truly improve the talent pool and improve student outcomes.

With the interest and assistance of more than a dozen key state education leaders and staff from across the country, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) is investigating what it would take for states to attract and support talented school leaders.

This report explains CRPE's efforts to create a coherent framework that any state could use to draft a strategy for developing and supporting a principal corps for the coming decades. It explains why principals are key to so many of today's education efforts and why now is the time to take action. The report then presents a focused data guide and a framework for thinking about policies that can help states get started.

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1. Kenneth Leithwood et al., *How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (New York: The Wallace Foundation, 2004.

2. New Leaders for New Schools, *Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship To Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnarounds* (New York: New Leaders for New Schools, 2009). Note: New Leaders for New Schools has shortened their name to New Leaders.

3. Tara Beteille, Demetra Kalogrides, and Susanna Loeb, *Effective Schools: Managing the Recruitment, Development, and Retention of High-Quality Teachers,* Working Paper 37 (Washington D.C.: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, 2009). Gregory F. Branch, Eric A. Hanushek, and Steven G. Rivkin, *Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals,* Working Paper 17803 (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2012).

4. New Leaders, *Urban Excellence Framework* (New York: New Leaders, 2011).

5. Jeff Kutash et al., *The School Turnaround Field Guide* (Boston: FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2010).

The Current Context

Highly effective principals are in short supply. Yet just about every major reform affecting U.S. schools today hinges on the effective management of human capital—which is, at its core, the principal's job. For example, many states are rolling out, or designing, teacher evaluation systems that sharply increase the principal's role in observing teachers and providing feedback on their performance. The federal School Improvement Grants offered to help states turn around their lowest-performing schools depend on the principal's ability to put good educators in place and lead and support them on the job. Interviews with several state chiefs and education leaders suggest that these increased expectations have brought into sharp focus just how much is riding on the capacity to cultivate and retain strong principals.

Additionally, the absence of quality leaders may be slowing the replication of successful school models. In Los Angeles, Green Dot Public Schools transformed Locke High School from a dropout factory to eight significantly higher-achieving college preparatory academies. Civic and district leaders hoped Green Dot could begin to turn around many more chronically low-performing schools, but according to Green Dot's CEO, scale-up is limited without a group of leaders with the right skills and experience.[6] The same is true of most other high-quality charter management organizations—from Yes Prep to Rocketship Schools, a crucial factor binding their scale-up is finding enough strong, experienced school leaders. A 2012 CRPE study of 40 charter management organizations in 14 states found that 61 percent were hindered in their efforts to scale up because of a limited supply of high-quality principals.[7]

The current system does little to ensure quality

With so many recent investments in schools explicitly tied to the performance of a skilled principal, and with so many schools in search of strong or transformative leaders, states have ample reason to be vigilant about their principal pipelines. However, many states are finding that they have largely left the recruitment and training of principals to a group of institutions with little investment in the outcome.

Traditionally, university-based schools of education have provided the majority of school leadership training, even though these preparation programs have been notoriously neglectful of districts' evolving needs. As districts were held more accountable for student achievement under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, they increasingly needed school leaders who understood complex data and could craft an instructional strategy that responded to that data. Preparation programs, however, remained loyal to a model that emphasized instructional theory and social justice. A 2005 report by Arthur Levine, former president of Teachers College at Columbia, summarized the results of a four-year study of principal preparation programs at the nation's 1,206 education schools.[8] His findings were grim: The majority of the leadership preparation programs were marked by irrelevant curricula, low admissions and graduation standards, a weak faculty, inadequate clinical instruction, and poor research. Surveys he conducted of principals and superintendents were equally sobering, with almost all respondents claiming they were unprepared to cope with classroom realities and in-school politics.

Higher education programs have few incentives to change their practices. Their oversight, funding, and accreditation are tied to basic program-compliance procedures, not whether they produce graduates who are strong school leaders. Most states don't weigh in on the curricula and rarely monitor the performance of graduates.[9] Few states and districts have more than anecdotal evidence to tell them whether a program is producing highly skilled principals or is little more than a degree mill.

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6. Marco Petruzzi, presentation at Portfolio School District Network Meeting, Los Angeles, February 24-25, 2011.
7. Melissa Bowen et al., *Charter-School Management Organizations: Diverse Strategies and Diverse Student Impacts* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2012).
8. Arthur Levine, *Educating School Leaders* (Washington, DC: The Education Schools Project, 2005), 28.
9. Some states are beginning to do this. For example, Louisiana ranks preparation programs by school report card grades.

Some traditional principal preparation programs have begun to offer more relevant coursework.[10] Aspiring principals at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Program in Urban Education Leadership focus on data-based decision-making and get three years of coaching from former principals while on the job at schools. At Southern Methodist University in Texas, the ED-Entrepreneur Center trains prospective principals in talent management, the selection of educational technology, and the development of a high-performing school culture. Nonprofits have launched alternative leadership training programs, such as the New York City Leadership Academy and New Leaders, which focus on job-based training supported by strategic instructional and management skills.[11] Taken together, however, the total output of these alternative programs is modest.[12]

Existing requirements may discourage good candidates

Some promising candidates may be dissuaded from entering the field, feeling the time and costs are not worth it. Yet they are stuck, because unless a state allows for alternative pathways to the principalship, the principal credential is awarded only after successful completion of a university-based preparation program. Strong teacher leaders may feel that leaving the classroom or school for a year or two to get the degree would not be the best use of their time. Similarly, experienced business or nonprofit leaders might not see the benefit of exiting their career to get another degree that may not adequately prepare them, but is required in order to lead a school.

In most cases, legislatures have empowered state education boards or credentialing bodies to establish the criteria for principal eligibility. Typically, these criteria are based on inputs, such as the completion of specific administrative degrees or credentials and the accumulation of a certain number of years of teaching experience. As is the case with continuing education requirements that enable teachers to move up the salary scale, there is no evidence to connect these inputs to better performance.[13]

When states use input measures as entry criteria for principal training programs, they shrink the supply of candidates around criteria that "signal nothing about the purpose or practice of the principalship," as one analysis put it.[14] Now, candidates must have taught for a defined number of years (three years is common, although some states, such as Connecticut and New Jersey, require as many as five), obtain a masters degree in school administration or leadership (with required courses on topics such as integrity and collaboration with communities and families), and pass a test.[15] The layering of requirements has not improved the quality or skills of school leaders.

Instead, states might consider a limited number of input requirements (for example, background checks and bachelor's degrees) and let districts develop interview screens that seek out particular beliefs and orientations (for example, a belief that every child can succeed, a focus on results, and evidence of persistence), instructional knowledge, ability to use data, and leadership skills to inspire but also critique individual performance.[16]

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10. For example, the Alliance to Reform Education Leadership at the George Bush Institute is building a network of innovative training sites across the country.

11. For example, the Rainwater Leadership Alliance is a coalition of districts and university-based and nonprofit-based preparation programs working to share ideas and lessons about how to improve leadership preparation in education. See http://www.anewapproach.org/alliance.html.

12. Christine Campbell and Brock J. Grubb, *Closing the Skill Gap: New Options for Charter School Leadership Development* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2008). Julie Kowal and Bryan C. Hassel, *Expanding the Pipeline of Teachers and Principals in Urban Schools: Design Principles and Conditions for Success* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Public Impact, 2009).

13. Marguerite Roza and Raegen Miller, *Separation of Degrees: State by State Analysis of Teacher Compensation for Masters Degrees* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2009).

14. Jacob E. Adams Jr. and Michael A. Copland, *When Learning Counts: Rethinking Licenses for School Leaders* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2005).

15. For example, see New Jersey's School Administrator Certificate of Eligibility, http://www.nj.gov/education/educators/license/endorsements/0101CE.pdf (accessed July 25, 2012).

16. New Leaders has developed seven selection criteria that these examples are based on. New Leaders, "Selection Criteria," http://www.newleaders.org/apply-now/selection-criteria/ (accessed July 23, 2012).

Nontraditional candidates with leadership and public service backgrounds, as well as many current teacher leaders, cannot enter traditional preparation programs without prior courses in education and years of teaching experience. However, with those prerequisites, candidates with low undergraduate grade point averages are welcomed into principal preparation programs. (Some programs have no minimum GPA cutoff.) Further complicating the picture is the fact that each state has its own set of standards and associated bureaucracy—the Principal of the Year in one state is not necessarily welcomed in another.[17]

In the past few years, more states have allowed alternative routes to certification, but learning about these routes, or even understanding traditional routes, is not for the faint of heart. Many state departments of education confound potential principals with websites that either provide no information at all, or are hollow and out of date.

Some states have started to chip away at the barriers to school leadership, passing legislation to open up non-traditional teacher certification arrangements and adding opportunities for alternative preparation pathways that bypass stiff credentialing requirements. Illinois passed legislation in 2011 that recognizes nonprofit alternative pathways to the principal endorsement and requires all preparation programs to meet new standards of rigor in recruitment and curriculum.[18] Policymakers behind these changes have seen how new preparation programs recruit and train a new breed of leaders who are quickly hired and get results.

But it is not clear that these piecemeal changes will get to the root of the problem, and they may even create new ones. Charter schools, for example, have generally looser certification requirements for becoming a principal. Yet that doesn't mean nontraditional leaders from business and nonprofits flock to those jobs. According to a 2008 CRPE study of 400 charter school leaders from six states, roughly 70 percent reported they were trained at traditional principal preparation programs and were themselves former principals from traditional public schools.[19] Interviews with charter school board members said they were very open to nontraditional candidates, but such candidates were not applying.

Additionally, allowing nontraditional leaders to become principals does not guarantee quality. Individuals from diverse backgrounds may bring a new set of strengths to the principal's office, but they will bring some weaknesses too. In the same study of charter school leaders, those from business, nonprofit, and other non-education endeavors who were hired to lead charter schools reported a great deal of confidence with the management side of the job—finance, budgets, hiring, real estate, fundraising—but really struggled with the instructional side, such as leading staff in instructional improvement and attracting strong teachers.[20]

To improve the supply of quality principals, then, policymakers cannot just identify and remove barriers. They must think systemically and define the problems they are trying to solve. For example:

- Do some schools have their pick of talented candidates, while others across town are lucky to take what they can get?
- Are talented, entrepreneurial candidates not entering the field because of barriers to entry, or because of bureaucratic constraints on principals' decision-making power once on the job?
- Is the supply of good leaders low only in rural areas, only in urban ones, or both?

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17. For example, in Iowa, an applicant for an "Administrator Exchange License" must pay $145 in fees, produce official transcripts, get an official recommendation from that program, show a copy of a current license, verify three years of teaching experience, and get fingerprinted. State of Iowa, Board of Educational Examiners Licensure, "Out of State Application for Administrator Exchange License Checklist," http://www.boee.iowa.gov/forms/administratorexchange.pdf (accessed July 7, 2012).
18. "Illinois Principal Preparation," http://www.isbe.state.il.us/esd/pdf/prin_prep_leg_overview.pdf (accessed July 7, 2012).
19. The six states were Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas. Christine Campbell and Betheny Gross, *Working Without a Safety Net: How Charter School Leaders Can Best Survive on the High Wire* (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2008).
20. Ibid.

- Is there a shortage of strong principals because of a wave of retirements, or are people in place but lacking strong leadership skills?
- Do experienced, successful principals flounder when they take on school turnarounds?

Most states, even those working to pass laws enabling alternative preparation and certification, simply don't have a way to answer these questions. Missing from the legislative process is an understanding of the data that make up the principal landscape and a strategic framework to guide principal pipeline policies.

Tracking the Right Data:
A State Principal Data Guide

Tight budgets, stretched capacity, and a limited appetite for wrenching policy changes suggest the need for strategic principal policy. The best place to start is by understanding a state's principal landscape. CRPE has developed a data guide that will enable states to assess their needs and build a comprehensive, state-specific strategy to address them. The guide is based upon the principle that data should drive our understanding of policy problems, and analysis of data should shape the policy response.

The data guide encourages states to track:

- Positions that might come open
- Leaders who might need support
- Outcomes of principal training programs

The ultimate goal? To have every school led by an engaged leader who knows how to drive achievement and how to develop and retain talented teachers.

The *State Principal Data Guide* is meant to help states synthesize the massive amounts of data already collected, gather important new data, and conduct analyses that answer key questions that will guide strategy. States typically already collect some data on principals and schools, such as administrative data that connect principals to buildings, and school performance data. Rarely, if ever, do states seek analyses that connect principals in buildings to their school performance to identify struggling principals. They also don't collect other data that would enable them to identify the high-performing sources of principals in order to support and promote them, or work with them to target specific areas of need.

The *State Principal Data Guide* has been split into three parts to more fully explain its value. The complete *Data Guide* is included in the appendix.

State Principal Data Guide
PART I: Anticipating positions that might come open

States should be able to project principal vacancies over five years based on historic retirement and dismissal rates. But they also need to dig deeper.

Because…	States need to track…
Principals retire.	*Principals who are one, three, and five years away from being eligible to retire.*
Superintendents retire and principals advance into their positions.	*Superintendents who are one, three, and five years away from being eligible to retire.*
Chronically low-performing principals need to be replaced.	*Schools in lowest decile that have shown no growth for three years of the principal's tenure.*
All vacancies are not equal.	*Vacancies projected by region and school type (urban, rural, suburban, high-performing, turnaround).*

Tracking vacancies

A state may have plenty of candidates capable of leading affluent suburban high schools, for example, but too few candidates with the skills to turn around struggling urban elementary schools or take the helm leading two rural schools simultaneously. The *State Principal Data Guide* ensures that states monitor not just the number but also the characteristics of anticipated vacancies. This enables them to assess whether their best principal training programs are producing enough new principals to meet demand, both overall and according to the specific needs throughout the state.

Especially in cases where principal replacement has proven to be particularly challenging—such as in struggling schools—pinpointing potential vacancies will allow states and districts the time needed to identify promising teachers and mentor them into leadership positions with proven turnaround principals. Strategic preparation is especially important when it comes to placing new leaders in low-performing schools.

State Principal Data Guide
PART II: Identifying leaders who might need support

To help provide training and mentoring, states must anticipate precisely who is likely to benefit most.

New principals	*Principals in their first or second year.*
Struggling principals	*Schools in lowest decile that have shown no growth for the last two years of a principal's tenure.*
Turnaround principals	*Principals newly appointed to schools in lowest decile.*
Location	*Principals in need of support by region and school type (urban, rural, suburban, high-performing, turnaround).*

Anticipating leaders' need for support

New principals, struggling principals, and principals who have stepped in to turn around schools each need special supports, ranging from mentoring to targeted professional development to freedom from some rules and restrictions. Certainly districts can and should be responsible for helping principals, but states have a role to play too. They can turn regional education centers into high-powered organizations providing training on data analysis, budgeting, hiring, and evaluation. They can organize principal networks, or a mentorship program where new principals are matched up with successful experienced principals. They can tap high-performing principals to turn around schools needing a dramatic improvement.

Whatever the supports that states offer, they can't be effective unless they are matched quickly to those who need them. The *State Principal Data Guide* helps states by identifying the characteristics and location of the principals most likely to require additional support.

The data can also be used to identify mentors. Some principals excel at developing young teachers from their own staffs to become the next generation of leaders. If a critical mass of successful leaders has a shared history in a particular school under a particular principal, that principal is likely a highly effective mentor. To find and tap such motivators for formal mentor roles, the state should identify principals with consecutive years of growth, discover which schools they previously worked at as teachers or assistant principals, and see whether any of them worked

under a common principal. Those strong mentor principals could help the state identify promising talent and their needs, advise weak training programs, help design new alternative programs, or oversee a network of aspiring principals and new leaders.

State Principal Data Guide
PART III: Assessing training

States should assess the capacity and outcomes of traditional institutes of higher education and alternative training programs, to identify those it should support and promote.

For each institution's graduates, the state should track:

- Percent taking principal placements in the state within five years of completing training.
- Percent showing two or more consecutive years of growth.

For each high-quality program—where 80 percent of graduates show two or more consecutive years of growth—the state should track how many principals it will train over the next five years.

Assessing preparation programs

In order to determine whether supply will meet demand, states need to identify their effective and productive pipelines and determine how many principals they will produce in upcoming years. Most states don't know how many people are enrolled in principal preparation programs, much less how many are expected to complete them. States can contact the program enrollment centers to get an estimate of anticipated graduates for the next one to two years.

The next step is figuring out which pipelines are high quality. States should assess which university-based and alternative preparation programs are placing a high percentage of their graduates into the state's schools, how quickly they get placed, and which programs' graduates are producing growth in their students' scores.

With this data, states can approximate how many newly minted principals will be coming out of their best training programs, and match that to other data to determine whether the demand is likely to be met. Ideally, states will want to see their highest-performing programs be their highest-placement programs. If demand is predicted to exceed supply, the state may want to work with its best programs to find ways to expand their capacity. If a program appears to have strong placement but weaker performance, the state may consider intervening to determine why it is underperforming or, in severe cases, consider withdrawing accreditation.

Once a state has a surveyed its principal labor market, it can start to make strategic decisions on how to use this data in service of smart policies and investments.

Planning Strategically:
A Principal Pipeline Framework

Now that we've outlined the types of questions states should ask and the data they need to collect, we turn to a set of guiding principles that should drive policy. The *Principal Pipeline Framework* is the sum of three important parts: the right work, the right people, and the right places, with policies in place to support all three.

Principal Pipeline Framework

The Right Work	**The Right People**	**The Right Places**
• Autonomy over staff, program, budget, and pay • Support growth through professional development • Accountability for performance • Competitive compensation and career ladders	• Limit credentialing barriers • Expand alternative preparation/certification • Find promising internal candidates • Attract promising external candidates • New HR mindset	• Job/talent clearinghouse • Pay incentives for challenging schools (location or performance) • Create an elite corps of experienced principals and give them autonomy • Expand the reach of high-performing principals (oversee several schools, start new schools)

The right work

The principalship must be designed to be a job that smart, talented, ambitious people would seek. This is not something that states typically address. But no matter how much attention is paid to getting well-compensated and well-trained people into the position, they are not going to stay there if their hands are tied on the job or if excellent performance goes unrecognized.

While states admittedly have less influence on the job itself than districts do, there is still a role for them. States can encourage districts to hold principals accountable by developing principal evaluation systems and district and school grading systems with teeth. A robust evaluation system that encompasses an array of measures—observations, climate, retention rates of effective teachers, attendance, and student growth and achievement—will give principals credit where it is due.

States also can empower principals to make decisions by getting rid of laws and regulations that mandate staffing requirements in schools, class sizes, how many students can be in a class, and how teacher time must be used. A number of districts that have taken this approach as part of a broader improvement strategy have, after decades of failure, begun to see improvements in student outcomes.[21] New York City, New Orleans, Chicago, Hartford, Denver, and dozens more of these Portfolio School Districts have handed principals control over a significant

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21. See Betheny Gross and Patrick Denice, "The Recovery Trends in New Orleans," paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual conference, 2012, Vancouver, B.C.; James Kemple, "Children First and Student Outcomes: 2003-2010" in *Education Reform in New York City: Ambitious Change in the Nation's Most Complex School System,* ed. Jennifer O'Day, Catherine Bitter, and Louis Gomez (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2011), 255-290; and "Hartford Public Schools CMT and CAPT Performance Overview, District-Level Analysis" (Hartford, Conn.: Achieve Hartford!, 2012).

majority of their school budgets and over decisions regarding staffing, curriculum, and professional development for teachers. In exchange, principals are held to clear and demanding accountability expectations.

Cities are also bringing in high-performing charter school networks or opening autonomous schools, which can attract entrepreneurial, passionate leaders. Sixteen cities have forged formal compacts, and more are considering them, to build productive relationships between districts and charter schools.[22] States can help with careful authorization and recruitment of high-quality charter operators.

Finally, competitive compensation and career ladders are key to keeping principals on the job. Principals who are producing consistent gains in student growth and who have the respect of their communities deserve to be compensated for their efforts. Successful principals should also have the opportunity to mentor other principals or oversee a network of multiple schools.

The right people

While states do not play a major role in shaping the principal's job, they have a lot of say in who can get the job, by controlling the certification process and determining who can train principals. To draw the right people, states need to do their part in eliminating barriers and pursuing talent. For instance, urban and rural schools may, on the face of it, have a hard time attracting high-quality principals. But they all have promising teachers who, with the right encouragement and support, could grow into talented leaders. States can help superintendents and principals identify these people by offering training on how to scout talent, providing finders' fees when good candidates are identified and accepted into training, and developing and subsidizing new kinds of training, especially for rural candidates who don't want to leave their community to apprentice. Similarly, states can develop a marketing campaign to elevate the status of the job and attract highly qualified nonprofit, business, and public-sector leaders who, with the right instructional supports, could be effective school leaders.

States also need to make sure that when nontraditional candidates pursue the principal job, district human resource offices are prepared to hire them. HR departments tend to view hiring with a very traditional mindset, whether because of state requirements or a particular philosophy—they look for prior experience as a teacher and preparation via an administrator program. States can shift this mindset by helping to train districts in selecting and placing of a new breed of principal.

Finally, states have a big role to play in monitoring the state and district labor market and tracking openings, areas of need, and potential resources. (The *State Principal Data Guide* can serve as a place to start.)

The right places

To improve schools, it is not enough to simply attract more candidates and monitor the labor market. Some schools are harder to lead than others, or too geographically isolated to appeal to many candidates, and states need to try new strategies to make these schools attractive.

A statewide, one-stop web resource can serve as a kind of Craigslist and LinkedIn, connecting districts seeking principals and candidates seeking jobs. If current and aspiring principals register on the site, the state can monitor job openings across the state and note particular skill needs (rural, turnaround, multiple schools, new school startup).

When it comes to schools that have trouble finding great leaders—whether because of high turnover, persistent low performance, or location—people may be more interested in applying if there are pay incentives. States can help by exempting such jobs from union pay restrictions. States can also minimize the strings attached to state funding, which can free up districts to use their resources differently to link pay to challenges or bonuses to expectations. Together with districts, states can approach businesses and foundations to make hard-to-fill

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22. For more on these collaborations, see http://crpe.org/district-charter-collaboration.

jobs more appealing, via partnerships, loaned executives to provide support (for example, strategic planning or budgeting), tutors, and financial support. States can encourage districts to provide schools with budget and pay flexibility so that principals can try to hold onto their good teachers when other schools offer them jobs.

Successful principals often go unrecognized. States can celebrate them in the media and community, and invite them into an elite corps of principals granted special waivers from traditional staffing models, class size require- ments, or rules about the length of the school day or week. Finally, as they do in charter management organiza- tions, successful principals could be invited to open new schools or oversee networks of them.

Putting the Data and Framework Together

Between the *State Principal Data Guide* and the *Principal Pipeline Framework*, even a state new to addressing these issues has the tools to begin to draw up a coherent set of policies to meet its particular needs. A state with some policies already on the books can use the data to map its current policies against the framework, to see what is missing.

State Principal Pipeline Metrics

To determine whether their strategies are working, and to see where more progress is needed, states need to track metrics related to a wide range of targets.

The following indicators will suggest whether the job of the principal is being made more attractive:

- The number of applicants has increased, overall and from competitive colleges.
- Principals in high-achieving, high-growth schools earn more money than others.
- All collective bargaining agreements allow site-based hiring and performance-based dismissals and layoffs.
- Principals have discretion over at least 80 percent of their school budgets.
- Every principal opening draws five or more applicants.
- Rural openings draw both local and non-local applicants.

The following metrics indicate whether the right people are ending up in the job:

- Increasing numbers of principals come from high-quality preparation programs.
- All openings draw good applicants, and few positions are filled with interim principals.
- Principal turnover is low.
- Teacher surveys reveal confidence in principals.
- Principal surveys indicate leaders are confident in the work they are doing.
- Schools show significant student learning gains within three years of getting a new principal.
- Experienced principals are taking on mentor roles.
- Leaders are open to trying new ways to engage students and improve student outcomes via new learning technologies.

The following metrics indicate whether the right leaders are working in the right schools:

- Student achievement and growth is rising, especially in the most challenged schools.
- The performance of principals' prior schools is higher than the performance of the schools they are entering. (This shows that proven leaders move where they are needed.)
- Low-performing principals exit: The odds of exit rise with the continued low performance of the school under a principal's tenure (suggesting they are being managed out).
- Successful principals stay in their jobs for five or more years.

Conclusion

Most states are stretched to capacity as they work to build new accountability and evaluation systems, turn around low-performing schools, and address teacher pipeline issues. It may seem daunting, on top of these other initiatives, to develop a broad strategy regarding the recruitment, preparation, placement, and support of school leaders. But each of the other efforts, and the federal and state policies behind them, will founder if schools do not have great leaders.

Here are steps states can take to build the supply of talented principals:

1. Collect and analyze data to prioritize efforts.

With resources scarce, the *State Principal Data Guide* can help states be deliberate as they choose where to invest. States already collect some principal and school performance data; they now should merge those to track high- and low-achieving principals and look for trends by location and school level. Only when they know where their needs lie can states best define their priorities. States with impending retirements should plan how to recruit and prepare leaders, and those with a younger workforce should determine how to train and grow people already on the job to meet the demands.

2. Choose some high-impact options to start.

In combination with the state data analysis, the *Principal Pipeline Framework* offers a set of comprehensive policies for states to improve the job of principals, attract strong candidates, and target their placement. Some options are cost-free; some are high-impact, and more expensive. Some policies will be easy to implement; others might be more challenging. Map out what can be done now, next year, and three years from now.

3. Collect and publicize data on preparation programs.

Most states don't know how many people graduate every year from principal preparation programs, where they work, or what impact they have on student achievement. Most states don't know where their best, or weakest, principals come from because they don't link performance back to preparation programs. States must begin to collect this information to determine where to expand and where to withdraw, and to make the quality options known to prospective candidates.

4. Pilot new opportunities among the districts most ready to try new things.

New preparation options, alternative sources of leaders, new school leadership arrangements, and new job freedoms have the best chance of yielding results if they are implemented by those who want to try them. Pilot new ideas and measure the outcomes. Grow the ones that are working; stop those that aren't. Proof of good examples is the best way to promote and grow change.

5. Link principal policies to teacher policies.

Almost every state is legislating change with regard to teachers. Rarely do principal policies get included. States should make it a practice to attend to principal policy whenever they tackle teacher policy. Aside from not missing opportunities, it's important that school leader policies such as evaluation, accountability and compensation align with teacher policies on those same issues.

With the right data and a strategic set of policies, states can align their principal pipeline with their education agendas and jump-start school improvement efforts. States need to act now—and act thoughtfully—to ensure that every school is run by an engaged leader who knows how to drive achievement and how to develop and retain talented teachers.

Appendix.
State Principal Data Guide: Data Elements

The *State Principal Data Guide* helps states monitor the number and characteristics of anticipated vacancies. Some data are available in state administrative data sets and performance data, but record-keeping procedures may make it difficult, if not impossible, to track individual principals year to year. Other information, such as principal success linked to preparation programs, is not collected at all. Consistent principal identifiers and links to their preparation programs are important steps that states need to take with their data. States that understand the value of this material will be able to collect and analyze it in ways that enhance strategic decision-making.

Principal demand	Principal retirements	# and % of principals eligible for retirement in the next 1, 3, and 5 years
	Superintendent retirements*	# and % of superintendents eligible for retirement in the next 1, 3, and 5 years
Principals in need of supports	By experience	# and % of principals in their first or second year of leading a school
		# and % of principals in their first or second year working at each school performance level in the state
	By performance	# and % of principals working in schools at lowest performance level in the state
Principal programs	Performance of traditional preparation programs (e.g., colleges of education)	# and % of principals trained by each traditional program working in the state
		# and % of principals trained by each traditional program working at each school performance level in the state
		# of new principals likely to graduate in the next 5 years from traditional programs that have graduates working in high-growth schools
	Performance of alternative preparation programs	# and % of principals trained by each alternative program working in the state
		# and % of principals trained by each alternative program working at each school performance level in the state
		# of new principals likely to graduate in the next 5 years from alternative programs that have graduates working in high-growth schools

* Superintendent retirements may create principal vacancies if there is a upward shuffling of personnel within the district. (For example, an assistant superintendent fills a superintendent position, and a principal replaces the assistant superintendent.)

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