

**Recommendations to Ensure Student Access to Fully-Prepared and Effective Principals  
Under ESEA and HEA Title II  
January 2013**

Research has shown that effective principals are second only to effective teachers among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Existing research also shows that the demonstrated effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances. In schools serving a large population of low-income students, minority students, students with disabilities and English learners, the impact of an effective principal can be profound as school leaders are the catalysts for sustainable school improvement.

To promote quality preparation and supports for competent instructional leadership and an effective principal for all schools and communities, we put forward the following principles for ESEA and HEA Title II reauthorization related to the preparation and sustained support for principals.

**FULLY PREPARED AND EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

- **All students are entitled to principals who are qualified (fully prepared and fully certified) as well as effective.** To meet the “qualified” standard, principals must have fully completed a preparation program and have met full state certification standards for principals. The requirement that every school has an effective principal should be afforded all students.
- **Principal effectiveness should be evaluated based on valid measures of performance.** Principals and their supervisors should work collaboratively to develop goals and determine measurements that consider the unique student, school, and community contexts that influence a principal’s job performance. Evaluations should focus on six key domains of leadership responsibility within a principal’s sphere of influence: student growth and achievement, school planning and progress, school culture, stakeholder support and engagement, professional qualities and practices, and professional growth and learning. The purpose of evaluations should be to build a principal’s leadership capacity and to encourage her or his professional development.

**EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PREPARED AND EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS**

- ESEA comparability provisions should be strengthened and enforced in order to ensure equitable resources for principals across schools serving different populations of students. ESEA should strengthen and enforce comparability requirements to ensure that low-income students, minority students, students with disabilities and English learners do not experience disproportionate numbers of principals without proven skills related to effective school leadership.

**POLICIES TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

- **Preparation programs should be held to common, high standards.** To meet the standard of effectiveness, principals and assistant principals must have demonstrated success in being a classroom teacher and in leading adults, have an advanced degree, and express a passion for and commitment to shared leadership. Aspiring principals must receive training during a year-long pre-service residency that includes coaching from an effective principal; hands-on

instructional leadership experience; and a curriculum that focuses on effective instructional practices, recruiting and supporting effective staff and leadership teams, developing a school vision and continuous improvement plan, addressing the needs of specific student populations, managing school organizations, and engaging community members and parents. In states where the certification requirements differ for assistant principals and principals, a candidate's experience as an assistant principal must be considered, particularly for those in the position and working towards full state certification. Both the traditional and alternative route certification programs should be held accountable for both program quality and multiple indicators of graduates' ability to lead schools successfully, based on valid and reliable measures. Programs that do not meet standards should have an opportunity to improve; but, if no improvement is shown over a reasonable period of time, they should be closed.

- **Principals must receive dedicated support through standards-based induction and mentoring programs, especially early career principals.** All principals, especially early career principals who are facing their most challenging years in the profession, must be provided with access to standards-based mentoring programs. This peer-to-peer interaction improves a broad range of leadership characteristics, including:
  - Nurturing teacher and staff development to strengthen classroom instruction;
  - Building and sustaining a culture of learning among adults and children;
  - Strengthening communications and relationships with parents, caregivers, and community stake-holders;
  - Facilitating the sharing of knowledge, insight, and best practices; and
  - Building relationships and communicating effectively with state and district officials.
- **Investments should be made in proven methods to recruit, prepare, develop, and retain fully prepared and effective principals in hard-to-staff schools.**
  - Use the Public Interest component of the Direct Student Loan program as a recruitment and retention tool by underwriting the first three years of loan payments for individuals who prepare for and enter the principal position in Title I schools.
  - Fully fund the Teacher Quality Partnership grants under Title II of HEA that support principal residency programs and partnership school initiatives.
  - Invest in Grow-Your-Own programs, especially in high need communities and leader education programs in Minority-Serving Institutions that will prepare a strong pipeline of leaders in minority, low-income, and rural communities.
  - Increase investments in high-quality professional development for all educators, including school leaders, under Title II of ESEA.
  - Focus school turnaround efforts and incentives on conditions that influence school leader retention and effectiveness, productive working conditions, effective instructional leadership, job-embedded professional development, mentoring, coaching, and time for collaboration.
  - Offer stipends for accomplished principals and those who take on master or mentor principal roles in high-need schools.

(See a complementary set of Principles to Ensure Student Access to Fully Prepared and Effective Teachers Under ESEA and HEA Title II, April 2011)

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