Recruiting, Preparing and Retaining Effective Educators

A Legislators' Guide

Introduction

While interest in becoming an educator has waned, research continues to highlight the importance of teachers and principals in improving student outcomes. Without highly effective teachers and principals, policies addressing other aspects of students' educational experiences cannot be fully realized. The good news is that educators can learn how to be highly effective. They just need the preparation, professional learning opportunities and support to get there.

Policymakers play a pivotal role in developing highly effective educators by providing direction and support for the different aspects of teacher and principal pipelines. Creating cohesive and aligned initiatives promotes a clear vision of effectiveness and supports the field in achieving that vision.

This guide considers the entire educator pipeline, providing a comprehensive set of policy options based on research and best practices for recruiting, preparing and retaining teachers and principals. In the face of current workforce challenges, state legislators and legislative staff can use this guide to think holistically about their educator pipelines and how best to address existing challenges.

The Importance of Teachers and Principals

Teachers and principals are the most important school factors contributing to student achievement. Replacing a below average teacher or principal with an above average one results in significant increases in student learning and achievement.

Average increase in student achievement

	MATH	READING
Moving from a teacher at the 25th percentile of effectiveness to one at the 75th percentile	Averaged across all students in the teacher's classroom	
	3.7 months of learning	3.8 months of learning
Moving from a principal at the 25th percentile of effectiveness to one at the 75th percentile	Averaged across all students in the principal's school	
	2.9 months of learning	2.7 months of learning

Source: Grissom, Jason A., Anna J. Egalite, and Constance A. Lindsay. (2021). How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

Although the increase in achievement is higher for teachers than principals, the principal's effects are across all students in the school, while a teacher's effects are limited to the students in their classroom.

Beyond academic achievement, teachers and principals positively impact a variety of other student outcomes. High-quality teachers and principals increase student attendance and graduation rates, improve their likelihood of earning high salaries and reduce the likelihood of engaging with law enforcement.

The diversity of the educator workforce also impacts student outcomes, particularly the outcomes for students of color. When students of color have a race-matched teacher, their academic achievement increases, intention to attend college increases, likelihood of dropping out decreases, absences decrease and likelihood of being suspended or expelled decreases. Having a principal of color leads to more frequent hiring and retention of teachers of color and improved math achievement and increased likelihood of placement in gifted programs for students of color.

Educator Pipelines

Given the importance of teachers and principals in generating positive student outcomes, recruiting, preparing and retaining effective educators is essential for improving education. Policy initiatives that consider the entire educator pipeline, the systems used to train, hire and support educators, can significantly improve educator quality. Such initiatives work toward providing a comprehensive and aligned system that supports educators while providing a clear and consistent understanding of what it means to be effective.

Educator pipelines have seven key dimensions:

Educator Standards: Adopting standards of practice and performance that guide preparation, hiring, evaluation and support.

High-Quality Preservice Preparation: Delivering high-quality pre-service preparation to high-potential candidates.

Selective Hiring and Placement: Using selective hiring and placement to match candidates to schools.

Evaluation and On-Going Support: Aligning on-the-job evaluation and support for educators and ensuring provided supports are of high quality.

Supervisors: Defining the supervisor role as one of support and building supervisor capacity.

Tracking Systems: Developing a longitudinal data system to track current and aspiring educators to facilitate data-driven decision making.

Systems of Support: Establishing political, fiscal and network support for educator pipelines.

Although teacher and principal pipelines are largely similar, there are some nuances between how the pipelines function. Throughout the remainder of the guide, policy recommendations will be described for teachers and principals separately only when needed to clarify the different applications.

The Principal Pipeline

Leader Standards

HIGHER EDUCATION

High-quality Pre-service Prep

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Selective Hiring and Placement

Evaluation and Ongoing Support

Principal Supervisors

Leader Tracking Systems

SCHOOL

Benefits for Student Achievement

Systems to Sustain the Principal Pipeline

Source: The Wallace Foundation

Creating Conditions for Successful Educator Pipelines

ESTABLISHING STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE

State standards for educator practice and performance establish the state's vision for effective teachers and principals. Although the standards themselves are generally adopted by a state's board of education, legislatures play a pivotal role in ensuring standards are cross-cutting, differentiated and aligned to the state's vision of effectiveness.

All states have adopted some form of standards for teachers and principals; however, not all states mandate the same standards be used across the teacher and principal pipeline. Having aligned standards communicates a clear definition of effectiveness and ensures preparation, professional learning, and evaluations support educators in moving toward that definition.

Additionally, most currently adopted standards apply to all teachers and all school leaders without accounting for the wide variation in teaching and leadership roles within schools. When standards do not address the various roles in each educator group, there is no clear state vision for effectiveness in those roles. As a result, either educators end up being held to standards that do not accurately reflect their role or the local education agency is left to develop the standards for the different roles despite capacity constraints.

Key State Actions:

- Develop standards that are differentiated for the various teacher and school leader roles, e.g., classroom teacher, teacher librarian, special education teacher, interventionist, principal, assistant principal, dean, athletic director, etc.
- Ensure all policies require alignment to the state standards.
- Provide flexibility for local adaptation.

DEVELOPING EDUCATOR TRACKING SYSTEMS

Educator data systems can provide relevant and timely data to help districts, preparation programs and policymakers make informed decisions and engage in continuous improvement. By ensuring data systems are transparent and widely available, state legislatures can also facilitate use of these systems among parents, students and educators.

Collecting and disseminating data on the educator workforce provides the requisite information to understand existing challenges in educator pipelines, identify areas of need and measure the impact of policy initiatives. For this to occur, states can require the collection of key data points and provide support for the development of data systems that are publicly available and easy to understand.

Key State Actions:

- Require data collections on information on relevant skills and staffing needs.
- Collect and disseminate data on preparation program enrollment and completion and align it with workforce and effectiveness data.
- Build feedback loops to ensure data is being used to support continuous improvement.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT PIPELINES

Capacity is a frequent challenge faced at the local education agency level, hindering efforts to establish successful local pipelines. To help build local capacity, states can provide funding flexibility, act as a convenor, and develop clearinghouses for best practice.

Key State Actions:

- Provide flexible fiscal support to local education agencies.
- Help build partnerships and networks across districts to share insights.
- Curate and disseminate information and model practices.

STATE EXAMPLES:

California S.B. 170 (2021) provides funding to enhance data collection, analysis and reporting capacity and to improve availability of data about teacher preparation, placement, retention, and diversity to the public, policy makers, researchers and the accreditation system.

Florida H.B. 1159 (2021) updates provisions for the state's professional development program for school leaders, requiring a collaborative network of school districts, state-approved educational leadership programs, regional consortia, charter management organizations and state and national professional leadership organizations maintain a clearinghouse and disseminate data-supported information related to enhanced student achievement and learning, civic education, coaching and mentoring, mental health awareness, technology in education, distance learning and school safety.

South Carolina H.B. 3591 (2022) improves the means for evaluating educator preparation programs by providing for the annual development and publication of the State Teacher Preparation Report Card.

By creating the conditions for comprehensive and aligned educator pipelines, state legislatures facilitate the success of targeted efforts to improve educator recruitment, preparation, and retention. Having a clear definition of educator effectiveness provides direction for new initiatives to ensure they are of high-quality and are complementary to the existing pipeline structures. Having comprehensive data systems allows for the development of targeted policy solutions that directly address the state's areas of need. Having structures to build local capacity ensures local actors have sufficient support for successful implementation of new policies while preserving local control.

Recruitment Strategies

The number of individuals enrolling in and completing educator preparation programs continues to fall, and the emerging educator workforce is not representative of student diversity. Given the localized nature of educator shortages and the importance of educator diversity, work is needed to increase recruitment of educators, particularly educators of color.

Teacher salaries are significantly lower than those of college graduates in other professions, and teachers are about 30% more likely to work a second job compared to those working in other professions. Mathematics and science teachers face a larger wage gap when choosing the teaching profession over other careers in those fields. Principal salaries also are seen as inadequate, especially considering the additional responsibilities principals have been assigned over time.

Schools with high proportions of minority students and students in poverty tend to have lower salaries and challenging working environments, creating significant difficulties in recruitment. Similarly, schools in rural areas often struggle to recruit educators because of lower salaries, remote locations and the need for educators to take on additional roles and responsibilities because they have fewer staff members overall.

Educators of color face additional barriers to entering and remaining in the profession compared to their white counterparts, including being underprepared due to a lack of exposure to college-level coursework in high school, feeling dissatisfied with the lack of diversity in preparation program faculty and being in an environment that does not reflect or respect their culture or experience.

POLICY OPTIONS

The following policy options provide ways to address the barriers to recruitment of educators.

- Increase salaries to be commensurate with other professions with similar educational requirements and provide funding for high-poverty districts to raise salaries to effectively compete in the educator labor market.
- Implement service scholarships or loan forgiveness programs that target high-needs areas, impose consequences that are not overly punitive, are administratively feasible, target well-prepared, committed educators and cover all or a large percentage of the loan.
- Create career ladder or lattice programs with formal recognition, release time to attend to additional responsibilities and salary increases.
- Provide other forms of compensation, such as childcare, housing assistance or tax incentives.
- Invest in grow-your-own pathways and teacher residencies to expand opportunities to enter the teaching profession for diverse community members.

STATE EXAMPLES:

Connecticut S.B. 1 (2022) establishes a minority teacher candidate scholarship program to provide annual scholarships of up to $20,000 to minority students enrolled in a teacher preparation program who graduated from a public high school in a priority school district and establishes the Task Force to Diversify the Educator Workforce to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of legislation relating to minority teacher recruitment and retention.

Delaware H.B. 430 (2021) creates a competitive grant Grow Your Own Educator Program to improve recruitment, retention, and diversity of educators in public schools, including a requirement for grant applicants to provide for career ladder opportunities and monetary compensation for highly effective educators to serve as leaders, coaches and mentors to program participants.

Minnesota H.B. 7 (2021) creates aspiring teachers of color scholarship pilot program, which provides up to $10,000 per year to support graduate and undergraduate teacher candidates who have demonstrated financial need and belong to an underrepresented racial or ethnic group, creates the underrepresented student teacher grants, which provides student teaching stipends for low-income students who belong to an underrepresented racial or ethnic group, and modifies the teacher shortage loan repayment program to specify eligibility includes teachers belonging to underrepresented racial or ethnic group, teachers in a rural district, or teachers in a shortage area.

Mississippi H.B. 530 (2022) creates the Strategically Accelerating the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers (START) Act of 2022, which increases the minimum salary for teachers ($43,000 with a bachelor's degree and 0 years of experience) and teacher assistants ($17,000).

New Mexico S.B. 1 (2022) increases the minimum salary by $10,000 for each licensure tier, amounting to $50,000 for level one teachers, $60,000 for level two teachers and $70,000 for level three teachers, principals and assistant principals.

North Carolina S.B. 654 (2021) continues the principal-recruitment salary supplement for low performing schools located in the bottom 5% of all schools in the prior school year.

Preparation Strategies

Once candidates have been recruited into the educator profession, adequate preparation is essential for developing effective educators and ensuring their persistence in the profession. As pathways into the educator profession expand, guardrails are needed to guarantee all educator candidates have access to key content and clinical experiences.

The table below details the key content and program features associated with developing effective teachers and principals during their preparation.

	TEACHERS	**PRINCIPALS**
Key Content	• Subject Area Content • Content Pedagogy • Teaching Strategies • Child Development • Science of Learning	• Instructional Leadership • Leading and Managing School Improvement • Shaping Teaching and Learning Conditions • Developing People • Meeting the Needs of All Learners
Program Features	• Rigorous Selection of Candidates • Clinical Experience, e.g., internship, apprenticeship, residency, etc. • Applied Learning Opportunities • Modeling of Pedagogies • Mentoring • Collaboration in Learning Communities • Inquiry and Action Research • Structured Opportunities for Reflection • Partnerships with Local School Districts	• Rigorous Selection of Candidates • Clinical Experience, e.g., internship, apprenticeship, residency, etc. • Applied Learning Opportunities • Mentoring or Coaching • Cohort Model and Networking • Role-playing and Simulation Exercises • Structured Opportunities for Reflection • Partnerships with Local School Districts

POLICY OPTIONS

To ensure educator preparation programs are of high quality, legislators can consider the following policies to leverage the state role in program approval and reauthorization and educator licensure.

- For preparation programs to receive initial and continued approval, require programs:
  - Provide access to key content.
  - Feature high-quality clinical experiences aligned with curricula.
  - Partner with local school districts.
- Require alternative pathways into teaching and leading be held to the same standards for approval and renewal as traditional pathways.
- Structure licensure requirements to ensure that teacher and principal candidates have the content knowledge and skills to be an effective educator.

STATE EXAMPLES:

Colorado S.B. 158 (2020) revises requirements for educator preparation programs to include support of candidate content and pedagogical knowledge and intentional clinical experience throughout the preparation program that is aligned with program curricula and state standards.

North Carolina S.B. 387 (2021) adds requirements for teacher preparation programs to include coursework and instruction on the science of reading to receive state approval and updates teacher licensure renewal criteria to include continuing education credits in the science of reading.

North Dakota H.B. 1287 (2019) and S.B. 2332 (2021) provide that in-state and out-of-state alternative teacher certification programs must operate under the same procedures and standards as traditional in-state teacher education programs.

Principal Preparation and Licensure Policy in Illinois

Starting with 2009 legislation, Illinois augmented its principal preparation and licensure requirements to enhance the requirements for becoming a school principal in the state. Implementation studies of Illinois' efforts showed that substantial changes in principal preparation design, curriculum and clinical experiences were made because of the policy changes.

Principal Preparation Policies

- Preparation program curriculum must meet the required standards for principal skills, knowledge and responsibilities.
- Preparation programs must include an internship.
- Preparation programs must have a partnership with one or more school districts.
- Nonprofit entities are allowed to offer principal preparation programs, subject to the same standards as traditional providers and approval from the State Board of Education and Board of Higher Education.

Principal Licensure Policies

- PK-12 principal endorsement is separate from certification for other administrative roles.
- Principal endorsement requires successful completion of an approved principal preparation program, four years of teaching experience and a master's degree.

These policy changes were driven by a joint resolution to create a task force on principal preparation. The task force, which included representation from Illinois Board for Higher Education, Illinois State Board of Education, school leaders, teachers, university faculty, state agency representatives, business leaders, PK-12 and higher education leaders, ensured broad stakeholder involvement that extended from initial study to legislation and rule enactment.

Retention Strategies

Recruiting new educators and providing them with sufficient training is necessary but insufficient to ensure all students have access to high quality teachers and principals. The majority of the demand for educators is caused by attrition, indicating the need to directly address educator retention.

When teachers and principals are given meaningful decision-making authority, have opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, and are provided early career support, they are more likely to be retained in the profession. Principals themselves can also improve teacher well-being and retention because of the role they play in establishing the working conditions in their schools.

Effective principals improve teacher working conditions, such as:

- **Teacher time**
  - Collaboration time.
  - Protection from duties that would interfere with instructional responsibilities.
  - Minimal administrative paperwork.
  - Sufficient noninstructional time.

- **Physical environment**
  - Appropriate instructional materials and resources.
  - Instructional technology.
  - Communications technology.
  - Office equipment.
  - Adequate professional space.
  - Clean and safe working environment.

- **Teacher empowerment**
  - Trust and mutual respect within school.
  - Leader support of student conduct.
  - Leader support of teachers.
  - Shared vision.
  - Teachers held to high standards.
  - Evaluations are consistent.
  - Feedback helps improvement.
  - Leaders make sustained effort to address teacher concerns.
  - Process for group decisions and solving problems.

- **Professional development**
  - Sufficient resources available for teachers to take advantage of PD opportunities.
  - Adequate time provided for PD.
  - Sufficient training to use instructional technology.

POLICY OPTIONS

Beyond the strategies addressing recruitment and preparation, which also play into retention, the strategies below specifically work to address the causes of teacher and principal turnover.

- Implement or expand induction and mentoring programs that include orientation to the district and school, support from trained mentors or coaches, opportunities for collaboration with other teachers or principals, aligned professional expectations, and ongoing professional development based on individual needs.

- Adopt standards for professional development, such as the Standards for Professional Learning, that promote content focused, job-embedded and sustained active learning opportunities.

- Adopt evaluation systems that allow for local adaptation, enable mentoring, coaching and professional learning, encourage working in struggling schools, and provide sufficient training and time for supervisors to conduct meaningful evaluations.

- Invest in school principals to improve teacher working conditions.

- Create structures to involve teacher and principal voice in decision-making.

STATE EXAMPLES:

Georgia S.B. 88 (2021) provides that the Georgia Teacher of the Year be invited to serve as an advisor to the State Board of Education and requires districts with a tiered evaluation system to use the resources saved to coach and mentor inexperienced and low-rated teachers.

Illinois S.B. 814 (2022) requires the State Board of Education to establish a competitive grant program to support the new principal mentoring program and to approve one or more eligible entities to provide services to new principals under the program.

Missouri S.B. 681 (2022) provides that the Missouri Advisory Board for Educator Preparation must include at least three active elementary or secondary classroom teachers that represent various regions and districts in the state.

Oklahoma S.B. 1631 (2022) establishes a mentor teacher training pilot program to provide training to one mentor teacher from each district in the state.

Conclusion

Teachers and school leaders are the most influential in-school factors affecting student achievement. To improve outcomes for students, it is essential to invest in high-quality teachers and leaders. Policymakers can create the conditions for successful educator pipelines by establishing consistent teacher and leader standards, investing in data systems, and building local capacity.

Once these conditions for success are established, initiatives to recruit, prepare and retain teachers and principals can be adopted as part of an aligned and comprehensive system. Promising practices include enhancing compensation, creating residency and grow-your-own pathways into the profession, leveraging preparation program and licensure standards to ensure access to key content and learning experiences, and providing support through induction, mentoring, and professional learning opportunities.

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