

# DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

by Jane R. Best



NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
of STATE LEGISLATURES  
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June 2006



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The Conference operates from offices in Denver, Colorado, and Washington, D.C.

Printed on recycled paper.

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ISBN 1-58024-\_\_\_\_-

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is an updated version of a previous NCSL publication, *The Role of School Leadership in Improving Student Achievement*, written by Fran Groff in 2002. NCSL is grateful to the Wallace Foundation for its generous support of this project and its commitment to helping states and districts understand and effectively respond to key, unanswered challenges of school leadership.

# **THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Leadership is increasingly regarded as a key factor in whether schools fail or succeed. Pressure on school leaders has intensified since the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The multiple expectations of the job may be deterring many prospective leaders who feel unprepared to keep pace with the changing demands of contemporary school leadership. The shortage of quality teachers is translating to a shortage of potential school leaders.

- The average time a superintendent stays on the job is between four and five years.
- By 2008, the number of principals needed to fill new positions created by growth is expected to increase by 10 percent to 20 percent.
- Forty percent of current school administrators will be eligible to retire within the next six years.
- Location and size of the district does not appear to be a factor; urban, suburban and rural districts all face shortages, although urban districts are facing more immediate shortages.

## **Why Focus on School Leaders?**

Strong leadership is essential for school reform to be effective and sustained. Research demonstrates that school leadership is second only to teaching among all the factors that contribute to student achievement. School districts that have been most successful in improving student

achievement have visionary superintendents who develop district policies that focus on both adult and student learning. They recognize the need for effective staff development.

Exemplary schools have an effective leader who sets the tone for the rest of the school and engages all stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and other staff—in schoolwide efforts to improve student learning. A study of principals and superintendents completed by Public Agenda in 2003 found the following.

- Ninety-nine percent of superintendents and 97 percent of principals say that behind every great school is a great principal.
- Seventy-nine percent of superintendents and more than two-thirds of principals believe that the first and most important step in setting a troubled school on the path to success is to find strong and talented school leaders.
- More than two-thirds of both superintendents and principals believe that, with strong leadership, even the most troubled schools can be reformed.

## **How Is the Role of School Leaders Changing?**

The role of school leadership has broadened from performing customary administrative and managerial duties—such as budget oversight, operations and discipline—to include emphasis on other responsibilities such as curriculum development, data analysis and instructional leadership. Among factors that contribute to the changing role are the following.

### *Increased Accountability*

The 2001 federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has redefined the role of school administrators by implementing standards and assessments for schools. Because schools now are held accountable for student performance, school leaders must place more emphasis on their roles as instructional leaders, data analysts and curriculum developers.

### *Students Are Different*

All across the nation, there is increased pressure on public schools to provide an adequate education to a student body that is more racially, economically, linguistically and developmentally diverse than in the past. Approximately 40 percent of public school students nationwide are children of color. In addition, according to both superintendents and principals across the country, special education needs demand an inordinate amount of district financial and staff resources. Although school leaders are committed to the belief that all students can learn regardless of outside influences, the reality of implementing this laudable belief can be daunting.

### *Management Issues*

Staffing vacant positions with talented educators is becoming increasingly more difficult. Only 36 percent of superintendents across the nation are satisfied with how principals in their districts recruit talented teachers, and only 35 percent are satisfied that their principals know how to make difficult decisions. In addition, only 45 percent of principals nationally rate the quality of teachers who apply for positions in their schools as “good” or “excellent.”

### *Instructional Responsibilities*

School administrators are now more accountable for the academic performance of all their students. Administrative performance will be based on the academic achievement of students. School leaders are expected to know the most effective techniques for improving classroom instructional practices to increase student performance.

### *State Policies and Unfunded Mandates*

The time school leaders must devote to meet state and federal rules and regulations is an important factor in the changing nature of the job. Eighty-five percent of superintendents and 77 percent of principals nationwide feel that an essential quality of a good leader is managing money efficiently and effectively. At the same time, 88 percent of

superintendents and 83 percent of principals feel that policymakers are enacting more mandates but are not providing the requisite funding to implement them.

### *Time Requirements of the Job*

The amount of time people in school leadership positions spend doing their job seems to be increasing. The average elementary school principal works 54 hours per week. High school principals reported working an average of 62 hours per week.

## **Why Are Exemplary School Leaders Effective?**

National studies and reports also highlight the positive aspects of being an educational leader. Although the changes in the role may have created dissatisfaction for people in the position or to those who may have lost interest because the job is viewed as undoable, many school leaders derive great satisfaction from the position. Some of the rewards cited by school leaders include:

- Working with teachers and students to create a culture in their districts and schools that cultivates learning at all levels;
- Implementing new programs that increase the level of student achievement;
- Being of service to parents, students and the community; and
- The experience of being a proactive, hands-on leader.

The most effective school leaders find satisfaction in seeing students learn and succeed in school, in working with students, and in helping teachers develop and be successful in their work.

## **What Can Legislators Do?**

- Work with local school boards, superintendents and school level leadership to pass legislation that will recognize the importance of effective school leadership.

- Recognize that the need for high-quality school leadership is essential to continue the quest to improve the achievement of all students in all schools. During the 2005 legislative session, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Virginia enacted legislation related to improving existing educational leadership policies and practice.
- Try to stay in touch with the schools in your district by encouraging both students and school staff in your district to visit the state capitol to gain a better understanding of the legislative process.

## PREPARATION AND PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

The question about whether schools of education are preparing administrators to be effective school leaders has been a pervasive theme and is emerging in legislatures across the country. Many recent studies by states and national organizations argue that traditional educational administration programs throughout the nation are too far removed from the realities of schools and effective practice.

State policymakers and practitioners have begun to scrutinize the elements necessary to improve the preparation of school leaders. Many critics of current preparation programs have concluded that the skills and knowledge most necessary for school leaders to succeed include not only problem and data analysis or organizational and team building skills but also improved emphasis on instructional leadership. States have increasingly begun to develop standards for educational administration programs and are intensifying efforts to assess whether these programs are meeting the needs of schools, which must meet demanding expectations in a new era of heightened accountability. To address the gaps in school leader preparation and training, colleges and universities are being called upon to improve the content and instruction in programs.

The Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have developed similar standards, and the two organizations are working together to create a national model of leadership standards that provides common language of leadership expectations across differences in state policies. Today, more than 46 states report adopting or adapting these standards in state policy for school administrators.

Increasing evidence shows that school leaders, throughout all stages of their careers, can benefit from a preparation program in which a seasoned leader helps an intern or protégé prepare to be a school leader. These induction programs vary widely from preparation program to program. Some institutions and programs require fewer than 165 hours; others demand an excess of 632 hours. More than 20 states have mandated or plan to mandate training components – such as within certification requirements for all aspiring school administrators.

## State Activity

- In **Delaware**, all university masters and doctorate programs have a clinical piece in each course and require a 120-hour summer internship in a school plus a portfolio. Aspiring leaders attend three seminars hosted by a combined effort of all three universities and are supervised by a district mentoring principal and a full time university faculty member. Delaware also is experimenting with seven pilot school districts and one charter school to develop school leadership models of succession planning in various regions of the state. The program requires that districts and charter schools identify a pool of high-potential aspiring leaders and provide training for them over a two or three year period in preparation for filling leadership positions.
- **Kentucky** continues to build on its benchmark legislation, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA); the state appropriated \$14.5 million in 1996 for administrator training and professional development programs. The state allocates \$2 per pupil for development of statewide programs. Today, the state concentrates on aligning training and professional development needs to the needs of school districts; each district is required to develop a plan for training its leadership personnel. The Principals for Tomorrow Program is a collaborative effort between the University of Louisville and the Jefferson County Public Schools. The program targets certified school personnel who exhibit leadership qualities and are interested in becoming school principals. The program curriculum incorporates instructional activities, simulations, field experiences, internships and mentoring. Each participant serves more than 400 hours as an intern and is assigned a mentor.

- **Maryland** established the Principal Training pilot program. The program provides monetary incentives to implement instructionally focused training for school principals. In this initiative, the state Board of Education is directed to award competitive grants of up to \$1,500 per principal to schools and school systems that is matched with \$500 in local, federal or private funds. Local school superintendents and the state superintendent of schools are to select 100 principals to participate in the training programs.
- **Iowa** has developed statewide standards of effective leadership for principals and has focused on ensuring that training programs and evaluation criteria are based on these standards. In 2006, the state has created a system of career-staged professional development for school leaders, based on the statewide standards. For the first time, this will be accomplished by public and private universities working together. The state also is developing statewide mentoring for new principals, including the possibility of requiring it by law for all new principals. The state revised administrator preparation program standards and now requires a 400 hour internship for all aspiring principals. In 2005, the state also approved an alternative principal preparation program for the first time.

## Key Questions for Legislators

1. Does your state have a clear set of expected standards and skills for school and district leaders? If so, are they tied to any national model such as the ISLLC or NCATE model? Are they tied to a performance and/or content-based test?
2. Are preparation programs adequately preparing school leaders to meet state standards and to be successful in the field?
3. What delivery mechanisms should be tied to state standards—public institutions, private institutions, leadership academies?
  - What mechanisms are in place to ensure that programs are meeting state standards?
  - Have any programs been discontinued?

4. What state institution or agency is responsible for oversight of preparation programs?
5. What are the characteristics of the most successful preparation program in your state?
  - What is the curriculum? What is the required number of hours for course work? What is the required number of hours for school-based or clinical experience?
  - Who serves as faculty—tenured or adjunct professors? How much experience does the faculty have in a K-12 setting? Are they required to demonstrate effective leadership and knowledge of instruction before teaching others?
6. Do the programs collaborate with local school districts to recruit potential candidates, provide clinical opportunities, track success of graduates, and use data collected to improve the overall process?

## LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

Most states base licensure on the number of credit hours completed in an approved educational administration program and require that principal candidates have teacher certification and classroom experience. Variation exists across states in several areas regarding administrator licensure requirements, including:

- Number of years the license is valid;
- Years of experience as a licensed educator;
- Hours of professional development necessary for renewal;
- Endorsement areas such as a K-12 or specific endorsement for elementary or secondary administrator; and
- Passing a state examination.

Historically, licensure requirements have focused on “inputs”—the number of courses taken, previous experience as a teacher, etc.—rather than on performance as a school leader. States are attempting to move toward a performance-based system by creating standards and requiring administrators to demonstrate knowledge and skills in order to be licensed or for license renewal. Several states are implementing a tiered or advanced licensure structure under which administrator candidates are granted a provisional license upon completion of an approved preparation program, with permanent licensure granted after completion of an induction or mentoring program. The time allotted to complete the clinical or in-school portion of the requirement varies from one year

to five years. Higher levels of certification, similar to that of a “master principal,” are based on a combination of professional development and performance as an administrator.

Some states are considering alternative ways to certify principals and administrators whose backgrounds are in areas other than education—most commonly those holding master’s degrees in management and public policy and those who have demonstrated leadership experience. Although this practice is common for recruiting and training teachers—45 states have such alternative programs—it is far less common for principals because virtually all states require aspiring principals to be experienced, fully certified teachers. In regard to superintendents, many states allow districts to apply for a waiver of certification requirements for superintendents who have skills that fill a need in a specific district but who lack traditional administration certification.

The Interstate School Leaders’ Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) created six standards to give some direction to state policymakers as they address the licensure requirements of school administrators. To date, 40 states have adopted the ISLLC standards. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) also developed similar standards, and the two organizations are collaborating to create national standards for administrators.

## State Activity

- **Illinois** passed legislation in 2006 to raise expectations of principals by making certification more rigorous in the state. The goal is to advance traditional administrator licensure by changing the requirements to include a provisional certificate following completion of a university-based graduate program and a two-year period of induction. Illinois also proposes a statewide program that pairs all new principals with a mentor; a mandatory evaluation that distinguishes aspiring, novice and experienced principals in the field; and a Master Principal program for seasoned professionals.
- **Oregon** has a mandatory tiered certification program that is directly tied to both ISLLC standards and to the state’s cultural competency standards. Accordingly, Oregon’s certification system is designed to

prepare its principals with the competencies needed to be strong instructional leaders who are capable of dealing with a diverse student population. Principals advance their level of certification by adhering to state developed objectives for the initial and continuing licensure

- **Washington** offers a state-funded Leadership Intern Program that provides funds directly to the public school district to cover the costs of the principal candidate who participates. This program allows candidates 45 days of release time from school responsibilities to participate in the intern program and covers the costs incurred for a substitute to perform school responsibilities.
- **Mississippi** offers incentives to teachers identified as promising candidates by the state board who are interested in becoming school leaders through The Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program. The sabbatical program targets the critical need to prepare future leaders for Mississippi schools. Funded by the Mississippi Legislature, this program enables local school districts to grant qualified teachers a paid leave of absence for one school year to participate in an approved, full-time administrator preparation program. A recipient of an administrator sabbatical must agree to serve as an administrator in the sponsoring school district for a minimum of five years.
- **New Jersey** has two stages of certification for all administrative certificates except supervisor. Standard certificates for supervisors, school business administrators, principals and school administrators are valid for life. The state passed legislation that allows school districts to hire school leaders from outside the education field, provided they hold a master's degree in management or leadership. An individual hired by a school district in a leadership capacity is granted a provisional license for one year. He or she then must participate in the principal residency program under the direction of a state-approved mentor.

## Key Questions for Legislators

1. What are the current requirements for administrator certification or licensure in your state? Are there different licensing requirements for K-12, elementary or secondary education? Is there a need for different licensing requirements?
2. Are there different tiers of licensure for administrators (such as provisional or entry-level, after completion of a certain number of years, and master administrator)? If so, what are the requirements for each level?
3. What are the requirements for renewal in your state?
4. Are your state standards performance-based?
5. Does your state have alternative routes to administrator licensure?
  - For teachers with master's degrees in areas other than educational administration?
  - For people with management experience and master's degrees in business or public policy?

## PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development has been an essential element in policy discussions about how to ensure that school leaders possess necessary and current knowledge and skills. Various programs are designed for school administrators and can vary widely from state to state, depending on state priorities. Concern exists that requiring only credit hours may not guarantee that school leaders are exposed to the most relevant professional development experiences. Roughly 25 states have minimum professional development requirements for an administrator or principal to renew his or her license. Variation exists among states with respect to the number of years of experience that are required and the number of additional credit hours that are required. To illustrate, consider the following states.

- Alaska, South Carolina and Wisconsin offer a five-year certificate that can be renewed upon completion of six credit hours of graduate work.
- Indiana offers both a standard license that is valid for five years after completion of six semester hours and a professional license that is valid for another 10 years upon completion of an additional six semester hours or 90 hours of continuing education.
- Rhode Island offers a three-year provisional certificate that cannot be renewed. Upon completion of nine credits, a five-year professional license is valid.

Continued professional learning is an important aspect of any job. For many years, educators have focused on the professional development needs of teachers. Although this is essential, it is equally important to attend to the ongoing learning needs of principals and other leaders in schools and districts. Research suggests that effective professional development needs to be ongoing, embedded in practice, linked to school reform initiatives and problem-based. The professional learning opportunities also need to build on the needs of leaders regarding the skills they have yet to acquire. Early indications are that providing development opportunities to school-based teams of leaders may also be beneficial to the school as a whole.

## State Activity

- **Washington** passed a bill in 2004 to authorize area universities to offer training for principals and superintendents over and above that required for teaching certificates and principals' credentials. This voluntary program will help people who are attempting to pursue additional career training but not be able to do so because of geographic difficulties.
- **New York** introduced a bill in 2005 to allow for an institute for professional development of school supervisors and administrators. This institute establishes formal professional development of school supervisors and administrators in and for the city school district of the city of New York; provides for joint administration by the New York City board of education and the collective bargaining agent of the supervisors and administrators; and appropriates \$3 million, contingent upon city matching.
- **Michigan** passed legislation in 2003 to fund the Department of Education (MDE), in collaboration with statewide associations of school principals, which established a principal leadership academy. The academy provides training for school principals, conducted by other school principals who have a record of demonstrated success in improving pupil performance. The MDE solicits input from school district superintendents and intermediate superintendents to compile a list of successful school principals to conduct training

at the academy. This academy focuses on these aspects of successful school leadership: strategies for increasing parental involvement and engaging community support, creative problem-solving, financial decision-making, and management ethics and techniques for cultivating student achievement.

### **Key Questions for Legislators**

1. What professional development requirements exist in your state for school leaders?
2. Is professional development tied to licensure in your state? If so, what is required for relicensure? How many credit hours are required?
3. Does your state require clinical or in-school professional development?
4. Is professional development linked with other districts, schools within a district, preparation programs and local universities?
5. How is professional development funded? Is any support for professional development provided from federal, state, district or private funds?
6. Are school leaders allowed release time so they can be out of the district or out of their school building for professional development activities?

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND AUTHORITY FOR PRACTICE

As policymakers examine ways to attract and retain exemplary school leaders, they also are examining the governance structures of K-12 schools and the level of authority school leaders have to perform their respective jobs to most effectively increase student achievement. In most states, local school boards and superintendents make most decisions for the students within their system. In fact, school boards and superintendents in approximately 14,000 districts nationwide oversee the education provided to approximately 45 million students. They are responsible for managing a staff of approximately 5 million people—consisting of administrators, teachers, and non-instructional staff—for budgets totaling about \$300 billion and for capital assets worth more than \$400 billion.

During the past several decades, funding of education has shifted from the local level—approximately 52 percent of school funds were generated at the local level in 1970—to the state level—approximately 50 percent of school funding nationwide currently is provided by state funds. New Mexico, for example, provides approximately 73 percent of all school funding. Due to the increase in state funding and to the shift in the expectations placed on schools, states are holding local school districts more accountable for the progress of their students.

The federal government—with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001—now is holding states more accountable for the measurable achievement of all students. Several actions have been taken by states to improve student achievement and increase the accountability for schools that fail to do so.

### *School Takeovers*

When districts are not effective in improving school performance, states are beginning to impose sanctions on those districts, including school or district takeovers. Historically, takeovers occurred if there was financial mismanagement within a district. Recently, states have recognized that some schools are unable to meet state performance standards without assistance or intervention. Currently, 29 states have enacted policies that allow them to take over a school district, usually due to a combination of inept administration, fiscal mismanagement, corrupt governance and academic problems within the school district. Many state policies provide a succession of sanctions for academic such problems, with takeovers as the ultimate sanction. Other state policies target a single troubled school district for an immediate state takeover. NCLB has brought many concerns that the incidence of school or district takeover may increase with the provision that, if no improvement occurs in the achievement of all students within a school for five consecutive years, the school must be restructured.

### *Charter Schools*

Charter schools typically are funded with public money and created within the framework of the public school system, but are founded by parents, community leaders, private companies and educators. Although charter schools continue to be included in a district's adequate yearly progress reporting requirements, they are semi-autonomous and are not always subject to the same requirements as other public schools. The provision in NCLB mandates that districts with schools that do not meet state adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals for two consecutive years must provide parents access to a better performing public school within their district—including charter schools—is likely to increase the number of charter schools.

### *School-based Management*

States such as Kentucky and North Carolina have changed their local governance structure with the creation of school-based management systems. Under such structures, schools are required to create a school

council generally comprised of a combination of teachers, parents, community leaders and the principal to work with school boards and the superintendents on general district policies. They also are responsible for a number of school decisions, including, but not limited to, selecting a principal and other school staff; developing and monitoring the school budget; developing curriculum, including instructional practices and text books; and developing and monitoring extracurricular activities for students.

### *Shared Leadership*

States such as Massachusetts have passed legislation that defines and clarifies the roles of the school board, superintendent and principals to share the leadership responsibilities to maximize efficiency and increase the achievement of all students within the district. The *school board's* role is to develop a vision and educational agenda for the district; hire and evaluate the superintendent; oversee the district budget; and provide a public forum for discussion by the community at large. The *superintendent's* role is to implement the vision and educational agenda for the district; develop an annual budget; develop an instructional agenda; hire principals; and work with principals to hire teachers and school staff. The *principal's* role is to develop directions for the school that follow the vision for the district; work with teachers to develop curriculum and instruction; work with parents to reach student achievement goals; and ensure that the school operates efficiently and provides a safe environment for students and teachers.

### *Restructuring the Current System*

The structure of school governance varies greatly by state. Changing local school governance structures can be difficult for states due to the strong tradition of local control. With the increased focus on student achievement, however, states are beginning to examine current school governance structures and assess their effectiveness. Suggested changes to local school governance structures vary greatly, depending on the state. Louisiana and Nevada, for example, are determining the feasibility of dividing their largest school districts into regional or smaller, separate districts. Kansas, South Dakota and Texas are considering the consolidation of small districts into larger districts. Maryland replaced

the elected school board in Baltimore and in Prince George's County with ones appointed jointly by the governor and the county executive officer, and in Hawaii, all schools are run directly by the state.

A significant ramification of NCLB is the effect that this legislation could have on local governance structures. In most states, the school district is responsible for tracking student progress and for offering alternatives to schools that do not meet state AYP goals for two consecutive years. The school district also is responsible for providing transportation and supplemental services if schools do not meet AYP goals for three years. What happens when a school district does not have other choices available? Who is responsible for providing those services—the local municipality, the state or a combination thereof? What entity is responsible for the restructuring or reconstitution of schools if such measures become necessary? Whatever K-12 governance structure exists within a state, it is important for the lines of authority to be clarified and for the lines of communication between different levels to be open.

### State Activity

- **Louisiana** passed legislation that specifies that any elementary or secondary school found academically unacceptable under the state school accountability system must be designated a “failed school.” The failed school will then be reorganized and operated by a designated Recovery School District in the manner most likely to raise school performance to an acceptable level as determined by the state accountability plan.
- **Kansas** enacted legislation that allows small districts to merge into larger districts to receive state aid for three years equal to the combined total of that which each individual district would receive before the consolidation.
- **Washington** signed a bill into law in 2006 that changes the powers, duties, and membership of the state board of education and the Washington professional educator standards board and eliminates the academic achievement and accountability commission. These changes enforce a shift in state board membership from all members

elected by local board of directors to a 16-member board made up of five members elected by district directors; one at-large member elected by members of boards of directors of state-approved private schools; the superintendent of public instruction; seven members appointed by the governor; and two students.

- **Nevada** passed legislation to create a Commission on Educational Excellence. This commission creates programs to assist school districts and individual schools to authorize funds for innovation and prevention of remediation. The commission practices ongoing review of school districts and how each adheres to provisions governing the statewide system of accountability.

## Key Questions for Legislators

1. Are governance roles and responsibilities clearly defined with the appropriate level of authority for each level? How are the lines of communication and coordination drawn?
2. Does your current governance structure effectively support student learning and public education?
3. Is the accountability structure within your state aligned from the classroom to the state level? Is there a clear understanding among policymakers and educators as to the expected goals and outcomes for student achievement?
4. If schools within a district do not meet state AYP goals, which governance entity is responsible for imposing the sanctions for school choice, restructuring and reconstitution of the school as outlined in the NCLB act?

## CANDIDATE POOL AND RECRUITMENT

Recent studies confirm that it is difficult to find high-quality candidates for school leadership positions. The lack of qualified and interested candidates for the burgeoning number of school administration vacancies is not tied to location. School districts of all types across the country are struggling to fill vacancies. The number of positions in educational administration is expected to increase by 10 percent to 20 percent through 2008. The average age of school administrators is 50. Most have been in education for 25 to 30 years and have served 12 to 15 years as principals and three to five years as superintendents. Forty percent of current school administrators will be eligible to retire in the next six years.

Diversity also is an issue. The 2000 census has documented that, among school-age children today, about 65 percent are non-Hispanic white, while 35 percent of school-age children are from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Further, estimates are that by 2040 no ethnic or racial group will make up a majority of the national school-age population. Although diversity in the United States has increased exponentially, particularly among children and youth, changes in the ethnic and gender composition of those leading schools remain marginal. The demographic mismatch between the nation's educational leaders is striking – 50 percent of principals and 95 percent of superintendents are white males. Only about 16 percent of the U.S. principals are educators of color; approximately 11 percent are African American, 4 percent are Hispanic, and less than 1 percent are Asian American. Today, women account for only about 12 percent of superintendents, although they make up 75 percent of the teaching workforce and 57 percent of the central office administrators

According to a survey administered by Public Agenda, the acuteness of the principal shortage varies among all school districts; only 40 percent of superintendents surveyed felt their district was facing a shortage, although 61 percent of superintendents in urban districts reported an insufficient supply of candidates. It is not simply a matter of finding people with appropriate credentials. Forty-seven percent of teachers across the nation hold masters' degrees, many in administration. More than enough "certified" administrators are available to fill open positions. In some cases, teachers who hold administration degrees have no interest in or are not qualified to enter a leadership position within a school. In other situations, teachers with master's degrees in their content area have the leadership qualities and interest needed to be a school administrator but cannot be hired because existing laws for licensure require a degree specifically in administration.

Although policymakers are examining different sources to increase the candidate pool for school leadership positions, the position of assistant principal could be viewed as an excellent training ground for aspiring principals. Unfortunately, the role as it is currently structured does not always provide that training. In many cases, the assistant principal is put into the position of disciplinarian and/or personnel manager and often does not have the opportunity to develop the needed instructional leadership skills. Principals often have neither the time nor the training to mentor and train subordinates adequately prior to the assistant principal's move into a principalship. As a result, assistant principals often find themselves unprepared to become a principal. A similar scenario is common for principals who aspire to move to become superintendents.

Restructuring school leadership programs, professional development and certification requirements to include exemplary teachers and assistant principals in the leadership and instructional decision-making positions is pivotal to efforts to increase the pool of qualified candidates. Creating a better defined path with appropriate training and support along the way is necessary to increase interest in school leadership among teachers and to successfully address the need for more experienced school leaders who have required skills in instructional leadership.

Easing reciprocity requirements for leaders from other states so their certification is more portable also is a way to recruit more qualified candidates to vacant leadership positions. Making pension and benefit packages more portable between states—and, in some states, between districts—also is a strategy to expand the pool of prospective school leaders.

## State Activity

- **California** passed legislation in 2005 that authorizes the superintendent to award funding to school districts and to county offices of education to provide eligible candidates, as defined, with instruction and training in the areas of school finance, school operations and leadership and to provide incentive funding for the instruction and training of school site administrators. The bill requires the state board to commence the process of developing rigorous criteria for the approval of state-qualified training providers and to establish an application process for training providers, with certain requirements.
- **Iowa** created an Evaluator Training Program in 2000 under the direction of the state Department of Education. The program was created to improve the skills of school district evaluators in making employment decisions and recommendations for licensure and to move teachers through a career path. An administrator who conducts evaluations of teachers must complete the training as a condition of license renewal. Those who complete the training and are certified will receive a stipend of \$1,000 from the school district from funds appropriated by the legislature.
- **Missouri** passed legislation 2004 that allows licensed teachers who hold a master's degree in an area outside administration or who currently are enrolled in a master's program and have a minimum of five years of teaching experience to be issued a temporary administrator's license. The candidate must obtain certification within five years.
- **New Jersey** legislation that allows school districts to hire school leaders from outside the education field, provided they hold a master's

degree in management or a related leadership field. A candidate for the principalship in a school district will be granted a provisional license for one year. The candidate then must participate in the Principal Residency Program, an alternative principal preparation program, under the direction of a mentor.

## Key Questions for Legislators

1. How many certified administrators are in your state and how many vacancies? Are there ways to encourage teachers with administrative certification to pursue positions in school leadership?
2. How is the role of the assistant principal defined? Is it an avenue for training future principals? Are current principals prepared to provide training to their assistants?
3. How can the number of women and minorities seeking school leadership positions be increased?
4. Does your state have alternative routes to certification for education administrators?
  - For teachers with degrees in areas other than administration?
  - For people with master's degrees in policy or management?
5. Does your state have reciprocity agreements with other states for the licensure of school administrators?
6. Does your state have agreements for pension and benefit portability with other states and with districts within the state?
7. Is there a need for salary incentives for hard-to-staff school districts in your state? If so, should those incentives come from the state or through collaboration with other entities that are interested in the recruitment of school leaders?

## RETENTION

The trend in recent years has been to decrease the number of people in central office school administration and to channel resources directly to schools and teachers. As a result the managerial functions formerly held by central office administrators have been assumed by the remaining central office staff or by the school principal. As more responsibilities have been added, other responsibilities have not been decreased. The current stress of the job, particularly the new emphasis on instructional leadership may be overwhelming for even the most dedicated school leaders, causing them to reconsider their decision to remain in school leadership positions. Studies indicate that school leaders choose to leave the position for some of the following reasons.

- The job is becoming more bureaucratic under new federal and state legislation. Too much time is required to complete paperwork and reporting responsibilities;
- Pay is not commensurate with the responsibilities of the position;
- The job takes too much time outside the regular day;
- School discipline is an increasingly vexing issue, with violence an ever-present threat;
- Inadequate support for school leadership positions exist among parents, the community, media and policymakers;

- Not enough authority exists in many areas—such as the freedom to hire and fire personnel—to allow administrators to lead effectively;
- Inadequate opportunities exist to interact with peers.

One strategy that has been used successfully to address concerns about isolation and to provide support for new and existing school leaders is formal induction programs, including strategies such as mentoring. Mentoring programs are increasingly being implemented within state revisions to licensure requirements. States such as Alabama, Arkansas, California, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia include mentoring requirements as part of certification standards. The idea of mandatory coaching or mentoring for new principals has been widely supported by new and existing principals and superintendents.

Job security also is an important issue for school leaders. With new and stricter accountability measures, it may be difficult for administrators to engage in the long-term reform efforts needed to improve school performance if the threat of losing their job persistently exists. Encouraging extended contracts with school leaders that are tied to new accountability requirements may help increase the number of school leaders who remain in the profession.

Another barrier that may keep school leaders, especially principals, from entering and remaining in the position is the amount of compensation they receive compared to many teachers. In some cases, new principals who are just entering the field do not feel they are paid adequately for the demands of the job they perform. Reevaluating the pay schedule for principals to make it easier for local districts to compensate principals adequately or to provide incentives, such as offering bonuses for leading hard-to-staff, low-achieving schools or for increased school performance, may increase the retention of school leaders.

## State Activity

- **Arkansas** offers a yearly incentive bonus for successful completion of the Master School Principal Program. The Department of Education also pays a salary bonus of \$25,000 for every school year,

up to five years, to any building-level principal who receives a master school principal designation from the Arkansas Leadership Academy and is employed full time as a building-level principal in an Arkansas public school district that is or was designated as a public school in phase two or phase three school improvement status, or a public school located in a school district in academic distress.

- **Hawaii** enacted legislation in 2002 to provide incentives to keep exemplary principals and vice principals at the school level. The legislation encourages them to accept long-term assignments in hard-to-staff schools, special needs schools, and schools with high teacher turnover. The incentives include allowing local school boards to grant principals and vice principals salary increases more frequently than once every three years. In addition, teachers, principals and vice-principals may accept incentive packages—which may include housing, mileage reimbursement and discounts at local businesses—provided by local communities.
- **Oregon** has instituted a program entitled The BELL (Building Education Leaders Locally). This project began with a class that examined the district's culture, operations and priorities. The class, taught by district administrators and supervisors, was followed by action-research projects, group leadership projects (such as serving on district committees), administrator internships and mentoring of new administrators. Three years later, five of the original 43 participants occupied administrative positions (three in the district); eight had gained experience by serving as administrative interns or by overseeing summer programs; and 16 were in the process of earning administrative certification.
- **Mississippi** established The Beginning Principal Support Pilot Program, first implemented by the School Executive Management Institute (SEMI) in 2000. The new Beginning Principal Support Pilot Program will assign mentors to new principals in five districts. The budget provides \$150,000 in initial funding for this program. The program attracts principals who have successfully served for at least three years in the public school system and who are interested in mentoring first-year principals. After completing the program, mentor principals support new principals. The support includes, but

is not limited to, direct administrative observation and consultation assistance in administrative planning and preparation, assistance in developing strategies to lead schools effectively, and performing the administrative tasks necessary to school leadership.

## Key Questions for Legislators

1. Is the job of the school administrator structured so that one person can adequately perform the job? How can the job be structured more effectively? Has the concept of distributive leadership been explored?
2. Is the structure such that leaders have appropriate authority to effectively perform their jobs? Is the structure clearly defined?
3. What is the current salary structure within the state? Is the salary commensurate with the demands of the position? Is the salary structure the same district to district?
  - Is there a system for performance pay?
  - Are salary incentives an option in hard-to-staff areas?
  - Are non-salary-related incentives an option?
4. How much peer support does the school leader have during the first three to five years on the job?
5. Does the state have an induction and mentoring process? If so, what are the requirements for mentors?
  - Do the mentors have to show effective leadership skills in their schools? Is there a requirement that all mentors be trained? Do trained mentors receive extra compensation?
  - Does the mentor have similar cultural characteristics—such as similar ethnicity, similar gender, similar background, urban vs. rural—as the inductee? Is that needed?

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