A Briefing on Strengthening the School Leadership Pipeline and Connections to Federal Policy

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Introductions

- **Paul Fleming**, assistant commissioner, Tennessee Dept. of Education
- **Wendy Robinson**, superintendent, Fort Wayne Community Schools
- **Steve Tozer**, director, Center for Urban Education Leadership, University of Illinois at Chicago
- **LaTarsha Green**, principal, Dawes Elementary School, Evanston/Skokie School District
Today’s discussion

- The Wallace Foundation
- Impact of principals and other school leaders and their preparation
- How states are investing in strengthening school leadership and using ESSA to do it
- The opportunity in the HEA to improve the preparation and support of school leaders
- Specific HEA legislative recommendations
- Discussion, Q&A
About The Wallace Foundation

- The mission of The Wallace Foundation is to foster
  - improvements in learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children and
  - the vitality of the arts for everyone.

- We work with grantee partners to develop -- then broadly share -- evidence-based, practical insights in our focus areas.
Current work in education leadership in 20 states and Washington, D.C.
Wallace’s policy engagement principles

- Full compliance with the law, in letter and spirit
- Say more only as we know more
- Support flexible approaches that allow for adaptation to local context
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Wallace has funded a wide array of research on school leadership.
Principals are key to student learning

- Principals are “second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”
  -- *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, Kenneth Leithwood, *et al.*, University of Minnesota, University of Toronto, 2004

- “Principals are multipliers of effective teaching.”

Students in a science class at Pittsburgh Public Schools.
Principals are key to retaining good teachers

“Teacher turnover is lower in schools led by high-quality principals…. Research further indicates that principal turnover leads to lower teacher retention and lower gains for students.”


“Principal effectiveness is associated with greater teacher satisfaction and a lower probability that the teacher leaves the school within a year. Moreover, the positive impacts of principal effectiveness on these teacher outcomes are even greater in disadvantaged schools.”

-- Can Good Principals Keep Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools? Linking Principal Effectiveness to Teacher Satisfaction and Turnover in Hard-to-Staff Environments, Jason A. Grissom, Teachers College Record, 2011
Principal pipelines are cost effective

- Because of leaders’ influence on schools, “efforts to improve their recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvement.”
  
  – *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, Kenneth Leithwood, *et al*, University of Minnesota, University of Toronto, 2004

- New RAND study finds principal pipelines are affordable
  - Pipelines are 0.4% of annual district budgets, according to study of six districts
  - Minimal cost for two “quick wins” – leader standards and selective hiring
  - Coaching/Mentoring: Average cost $1,500 per principal

Principals are critical to improving struggling schools

• “...there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst.”

• “There seems little doubt that both district and school leadership provides a critical bridge between most educational-reform initiatives, and having those reforms make a genuine difference for all students.”

-- How Leadership Influences Student Learning, Kenneth Leithwood, et al, University of Minnesota, University of Toronto, 2004
Principal supervisors play an important role in supporting principals

- Principals need support from principal supervisors, including relevant evaluation, in order to maximize their impact.
- A focus on strengthening teaching and learning is crucial.
  - Representative survey of principals nationwide finds principals value their supervision and mentoring more when it’s focused on instruction.
- 86% of principals in six urban districts who were advised to improve received support to do so from their supervisors.

Principal pipelines benefit both districts and new principals

- Districts can do it
- The benefits for both districts and new principals are substantial
- Leader standards are important
- Leader evaluation systems seen as ‘fair’
- Mentors and principal supervisors are the most valued supports among novice principals

30+ studies on school leadership meet ESSA evidence requirements

- 18 meet Tiers I through III evidence requirements

Key conclusions:
- “School leadership can be a powerful driver of improved education outcomes.”
- “Activities designed to improve school leadership demonstrate positive impact on student, teacher, and principal outcomes....”

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Growing recognition of the importance of school leadership

- The Education Commission of the States reports that 37 states introduced or passed legislation related to school leadership in 2017

- 48 states have adopted or adapted voluntary national leader standards
  - 12 states have adopted the 2015 national Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)
ESSA is being used by states to strengthen leadership

- All 50 states (plus DC and Puerto Rico) have included school leadership in their ESSA plans (New Leaders: 2018)

- 24 states are using ESSA Title II Part A optional 3% set-aside for school leadership for:
  - Leadership academies, especially skills to turn around high-needs schools
  - University-district partnerships to develop new programs
  - Networks of learning communities among districts and local communities
  - Improving principals’ teacher evaluation skills
  - Programs for principal supervisors
ESSA Leadership Learning Community

- 10 participating states with teams from:
  - SEA, urban districts, other districts, civil rights community, universities

- Each state working on its own local priorities for improving principals and other school leaders to turn around the highest-needs schools. Examples:
  - Tennessee’s *Leadership for Equity Playbook*
  - Minnesota’s learning networks to support high-needs schools in partnering with local communities to tackle specific inequities, such as discipline policies and access to rigorous coursework

- National partnership among Wallace, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of the Great City Schools and the National Urban League
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HEA can help scale effective leader preparation through evidence and tools

- Most principals receive their leadership training from university programs
- Both superintendents and university officials agree that those programs need to be improved to better reflect the reality of the job today
- Strong district/university partnerships are essential (and rare)
- Courses need to be based in the reality of the job

Specific legislative recommendations for HEA Title II, Part A

- Include the phrase “principals and other school leaders” in addition to “teachers,” as was done in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

- Provide additional flexibility and options to states and universities to prioritize education leadership
  - Ensure that eligible entities have the option to focus their Title II, Part A grant on leader preparation activities or teacher preparation activities or a combination.

- Encourage the use of evidence-based strategies
  - Include definitions of induction programs, mentoring, residency programs and school leadership skills appropriate for principals and other school leaders.
  - Create a set of priorities in competitive grants.
For more evidence and information – wallacefoundation.org
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