

COMMENT on EED Proposed Priorities

**TO:** Orman Feres, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

**FROM:** Dr. Erika Hunt and Dr. Lisa Hood, The Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP)

**RE:** Comments on the Proposed Priorities—Effective Educator Development Division Programs

We are taking the opportunity to submit comments on the FY21 EED Proposed Priorities for programs in the Educator Development Division. Our primary purpose is to ensure that the priorities focus not only on preparing and developing teachers, but also explicitly include leaders as an important group of educators who have a significant impact on the teacher workforce, organizational effectiveness, and student learning outcomes.

***Proposed Priority #2 – Increasing Educator Diversity***

Proposed Priority 2 concentrates on funding projects that increase the diversity of educators. We acknowledge the research that shows the positive impact that diverse teachers have on all students, most especially for our increasing numbers of diverse students. However, our concern is that many of the proposed types of projects listed (in particular, items b – e) focus mostly on preparing and developing diverse teachers. There is little to no specific mention of funding projects that work with preparing and developing diverse leaders or developing leaders with the cultural competency, knowledge, and skills to attract, recruit, and retain diverse staff. Today in our state, approximately half of Illinois public school students are students of color, yet the teaching force remains 85 percent white[[1]](#endnote-2). Research shows that teacher-student demographic congruence for minority students can positively impact minority students with many outcomes, including raising the educational expectations of and academic achievement, improved student attendance, decreased school suspensions and reduced discipline referrals, increased referrals for gifted and talented services, and decreased likelihood of school dropout[[2]](#endnote-3). However, to protect our investments in increasing teacher diversity, we also need to intentionally prepare and develop school leaders who can develop and foster an equitable school vision, foster supportive working conditions, and promote inclusive, culturally responsive practices throughout the school building. **While efforts to focus on a diverse teaching force is important, focusing on diverse and culturally responsive leadership also matters.** When policy makers combine leadership development with teacher development, they create a disproportional funding scenario that ignores the multiplying effect of the principal in favor of a system whereby teachers, due to their larger numbers and direct impact on students, receive the greatest amount of attention. While support for teachers is important, neglecting leadership efforts ignores the larger impact and therefore greater return on investment that could be achieved by investing in improving principal quality through strategies aimed at building their capacity to scale effective teaching and leadership practices.

We are suggesting that diverse leaders and preparing leaders with knowledge and skills regarding equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive teaching practices is also key in improving teaching and learning and promoting outcomes for diverse students. We support this assertion with the following claims:

1. ***Leadership Matters:*** Over the last decade a growing body of research has demonstrated the influence principals can have as “powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools.[[3]](#endnote-4) While it has been widely accepted that instructional quality is the single most important school-based factor leading to student achievement[,[[4]](#endnote-5)](#_bookmark20) scaling high-quality instruction schoolwide does not happen without the leadership of an effective principal.[[5]](#endnote-6) Over the past two decades, researchers have increasingly focused on the importance of principal role and have concluded that principals have a significant impact on student learning - independent of the other factors affecting achievement[.[[6]](#endnote-7)](#_bookmark21) In fact, ***principals’ influence accounts for about one-quarter of school-level variation in student achievement[[7]](#endnote-8) and the principal’s impact is greatest in schools with the greatest needs.[[8]](#endnote-9)*** A recent meta-analysis revealed that increasing school leadership effectiveness by one standard deviation could lead to a ten-percentile point gain in student achievement.[[9]](#endnote-10) That ***represents a massive return on investment because the principal can act as a multiplier by creating conditions to scale effective practice school-wide***.

While preparing, recruiting, and retaining leaders of color is important for the same reasons that research says it is important to have diverse teachers, it is also important that all leaders receive the preparation and professional development to learn culturally responsive leadership practices to foster equitable, inclusive learning organizations exemplified by a collaborative culture of inquiry for leaders, faculty and staff, and students.

1. ***Leaders Effects on Teacher Retention:*** Principals’ knowledge, skills, and actions have a profound impact on: 1) recruitment, development, and retention of effective teachers; 2) equitable resource allocation; 3) working conditions; 4) school climate and culture; and 5) the continuous improvement process.[[10]](#endnote-11) However, none of this happens by accident[.[[11]](#endnote-12)](#_bookmark24) Principals are *change agents* in schools and their leadership is the single most determinant factor in teacher retention and that influence is even greater when it comes to retaining diverse teachers.[[12]](#endnote-13) ***Districts pay a steep price with principal attrition, as hiring and onboarding a new principal costs a district on average $75,000, and student achievements has been shown to decrease in the year following a principal departure.[[13]](#endnote-14)***

Additionally, teacher attrition costs the United States up to $2.2 billion annually, according to a 2014 report from Alliance for Excellent Education.[[14]](#endnote-15) While statewide teacher attrition has remained fairly low in Illinois, at 15-16% over the past five years,[[15]](#endnote-16) that statistic obscures the difficulty that some districts have experienced in finding teachers to replace those that leave, particularly in rural and high- need schools. **It is important to note the connection between the actions of the principal and teacher attrition, as leadership is cited as the most important factor in teachers’ decisions to stay in their school or in the profession.** Correspondingly, research has found that improvements in school leadership were strongly related to reductions in teacher turnover.[[16]](#endnote-17) That is why investments in leadership development have been identified as one of the key strategies to addressing teacher shortages[.](#_bookmark27)[[17]](#endnote-18) **“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.”[[18]](#endnote-19)**

Research suggests that leaders of color are more likely to recruit and retain educators of color within their schools and districts.[[19]](#endnote-20) Additionally, efforts to increase diverse educators in our schools and districts cannot just **focus** on recruiting and preparation. According to a report by the Learning Policy Institute, “An estimated 90% of teacher demand is driven by teachers who leave the profession. Two thirds of that demand is caused by teachers who have left for reasons other than retirement.[[20]](#endnote-21) Teachers of color move schools or leave the profession at a higher annual rate than do White teachers, much of which is due to the poor working conditions of schools in which diverse teachers are placed.10 Investing in both teachers and principals is important as working conditions are a key predictor of whether teachers stay in their building and the profession. School leaders set and support these working conditions.

**With this in mind, an investment in developing highly effective school and district leaders able to build supportive working environments for staff, but especially for staff of color, is critical in order to recruit and retain educators that reflect the diversity of the student body.**

1. ***Organization Leaders of Instructional Improvements:*** In recent years, much attention has been spent on developing principals as instructional leaders by focusing on activities involved in teacher supervision. In other words, principal development largely focused on the efforts of the leader in developing and providing feedback to meet the individual needs of each teacher. However, a growing body of research has developed a new conceptualization of the principal role as an ***Organizational Leader of Instructional Improvement.[[21]](#endnote-22)i*** This is an important distinction, as it addresses a faulty underlying assumption of the principal as an instructional leader because it does not require the principal to be the ultimate subject matter expert in all content areas and at all grade levels. Rather, it focuses the work of the principal on high-leverage activities that are consequential to changing practice and increase student learning, such as engaging teacher teams in instructional improvement efforts. In other words, effective principals establish conditions (e.g., scheduling adequate collaboration time, allocating sufficient resources, etc.). In this respect, the principal is viewed as a multiplier of effective practice, able to scale improvements school-wide rather than classroom by classroom.

Through the support of two multi-year grants from the US Department of Education, CSEP has supported the development of school leaders in 140 schools around this notion of the principal serving as a facilitator, organizer, and collaborative leader of instructional improvement. CSEP, in partnership with six Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), have provided ongoing training and coaching support to principals and their Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT). The Project aims to build the capacity of principals to distribute leadership focused on high impact strategies that engage teacher teams in instructional improvement efforts that truly change practice. Through this work, the 6 ROEs are serving as Leadership (LEAD) Hubs that will sustain the work after the federal grant funding ends.

Research on distributed leadership shows that the most effective distributed leadership practices are ones that are responsive to the contexts within which the leaders and school and district staff work.[[22]](#endnote-23) The distributed leadership model is most effective when opportunities for leadership is distributed according to the expertise of faculty and staff rather than by position title or seniority.[[23]](#endnote-24) An effective distributed leadership model results in teachers who have a strengthened commitment to the school, and results in school improvement and improved student outcomes.[[24]](#endnote-25) With these grants, participating principals are receiving job-embedded coaching and training to develop a distributed leadership system in their schools working with faculty and staff through Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) and teacher teams. These teams are focused on implementing school-wide instructional improvements. To do this, principals and the teacher leaders on the ILTs foster a school-wide culture of collaborative inquiry. To build the capacity of the teacher leaders and teachers, principals facilitate the adult learning growth in the school and place responsibility in the hands of the teams to identify the root causes of student learning problems, identify the responsive teaching strategies, and monitor the implementation and impact these strategies have on the identified student learning problem.

These collaborative improvement practices, (i.e., principals working in collaboration with teachers as a cohesive team) which focus on developing and implementing responsive strategies within the lens of equitable outcomes, are the key to successfully reaching school improvement goals. Additionally, they have been found to support teacher self-efficacy, which is particularly crucial during the current health crisis that has forced many teachers to shift abruptly to remote or hybrid learning models. Researchers at the Annenberg Institute examined teachers’ experiences during the health emergency caused by COVID-19. To understand what facilitated or inhibited effective teaching during remote learning, they surveyed nearly 8,000 teachers from across the country. As expected, they found that the abrupt shift to remote learning resulted in a sudden and significant drop in teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. They also identified specific school conditions that leaders established that shielded teachers from the drop in self-efficacy, including: 1) time for meaningful collaboration with peers; 2) targeted training, and 3) fair and transparent expectations. Teachers who reported that these conditions were present in their schools were significantly less likely to experience declines in their sense of self-efficacy and more likely to provide high-quality instruction. Researchers stressed that survey data “demonstrated the power of supportive working environments in helping teachers adjust to even catastrophic change.[[25]](#endnote-26) **Effective principals establish the collaborative conditions that support teacher engagement in meaningful improvement efforts, and they model and guide that work through supporting a culture of inquiry.**

1. Illinois School Report Card (Teacher and Principal Retention data), 2019-2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Dee, 2004; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015; Gershenson, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2018; Goldhaber, Theobald & Tien, 2019; Grissom & Redding, 2015; Holt & Gershenson, 2015; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; National Bureau of Economic Research, 2018; Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Redding, 2016; Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Manna, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Darling-Hammond, 2000 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Bryke, et al., 2010, Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Waters, et al., 2003; Witziers, et al., 2003 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Fuller, 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. Leithwood, et al. 2004; Branch, et al. 2009; Hallinger & Heck 1998 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. Clifford, et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano, et al., 2005; Murphy, et al., 2006; Pounder, et al., 1995 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. Bryke, et al., 2010, Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Waters, et al., 2003; Witziers, et al., 2003 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. Ingersoll, R. & May, H., 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. Beteille, T., Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S., 2011; and Johnson, L., 2005 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. Haynes, M., 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. Illinois State Report Card, 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. Learning Policy Institute, 2016; Barnett, B., Henry, D. A., Vann, B., & St Clement, T., 2008 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. Grissom, 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. ECS Building a Diverse Teacher Workforce Report found at: <https://www.ecs.org/building-a-diverse-teacher-workforce/> [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. Grissom, J. & Loeb, S., 2009; Horng, E., Klasik, D., & Loeb, S., 2010 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2019; Harris, 2013; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Kraft, M. A., Simon, N. S., & Lyon, M. A., 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)