

ASK THE TEAM

BY NICK YODER, DRYW FREED, AND JENNI FETTERS

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Improving School Leader Preparation: Collaborative Models for Measuring Effectiveness

Question From the Field

How are states supporting principal preparation programs in measuring and using program results to build a strong principal pipeline?

Parallel efforts in principal evaluation and educator preparation are prompting new conversations among states, higher education programs, private foundations, and professional associations about strengthening school leadership development pipelines. A strong school principal pipeline has many elements, but each element supports the evaluation and development of current and future school principals; these elements include common, aligned leadership standards; performance measures; and professional learning supports. Taken together, a strong principal pipeline guides and grounds principal recruitment, preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support (Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2013). School districts and principal preparation programs both have separate but related roles in improving principal pipelines; however, because separate organizations are responsible for supporting principals' careers, P-20 partnerships or state agencies coordinate principal pipeline improvement efforts.

In this *Ask the Team* brief, we highlight state activities and pertinent research on principal preparation, specifically state efforts to measure principal preparation program effectiveness. State efforts to create models for leadership program accountability face numerous methodological

What is a principal preparation program?

In this brief, we define a principal preparation program as a state-accredited program of study that fully or partially prepares educators for certification as a school principal.

What is program approval and accreditation?

In this brief, we define program approval and accreditation as the state's regulatory framework defining standards, reporting requirements, and review processes that must be met by:

- New preparation programs before initiating candidate recruitment (initial approval).
- Established preparation programs to continue qualifying graduates for either partial or full professional accreditation (reapproval).

challenges. To inform collaborative efforts across a variety of policymakers and stakeholders, we reviewed information on principal preparation accountability models, examined existing reports on pilot approaches in states, and identified existing partnerships that are tackling this challenging work. In the sections that follow, we offer information on the following:

- **State of the state:** What measures do most states say they collect and how do they use the data?
- **Testing the waters:** What new accountability models are states piloting?
- **Charting your course:** What are some strategies for establishing a collaborative model?

We offer these examples as a starting point for discussions on principal preparation program effectiveness, continuous improvement, and accountability. The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) does not endorse any of the models described in the brief but rather offers them for informational purposes only.

Introduction. Our search indicates that principal preparation programs ascribe to common standards for principal professional practice, but the programs do not commonly have performance measures that are tied to principals' postgraduation experiences. State education agencies, districts, and national organizations are currently collaborating to develop valid and reliable measures of how preparation program content, clinical experiences, and training supports provide optimal learning opportunities to future principals.

Our review identified few principal preparation policy reviews or accountability models. Previous reviews of state accountability and approval systems for leadership preparation have identified an overall lack of rigor in program accountability measures and inadequate data on program impacts (Briggs, Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013). No widely accepted model of preparation program accountability exists and few research studies find connections between principal preparation program features and principal success, school performance, or improved school culture. This lack of guidance makes collaboration among multiple actors—state education agencies, policymakers, institutions of higher education, national associations, districts, and foundations—crucial in identifying new models for leadership preparation accountability and program evaluation.

Report to Note

The Reform Support Network's (RSN's) *Promising Practices in Approving and Renewing Principal Preparation Programs* (February 2014) offers five recommendations for state leaders interested in improving principal preparation. Based on policy analysis and interviews with several states' leaders, RSN compiled a set of helpful considerations:

- "Create clear and comprehensive expectations for programs.
- Establish specific, quality-focused fieldwork criteria.
- Plan how to collect and use outcome data.
- Conduct site visits for approving and renewing programs.
- Clearly indicate requirements on the application for new programs." (p. 1)

The report includes links to example approval frameworks and guidelines from several states.

Source: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/ech-assist/promising-practices-principal-preparation.pdf>

1. STATE OF THE STATE

What measures do most states say they collect and how do they use the data?

States vary widely in how they assess principal preparation program quality and effectiveness, but they typically do so as part of program approval and renewal processes (Briggs et al., 2013). To help clarify how different categories of measures are related to each other, we have grouped them into two types that we will use throughout the brief when describing state approaches to measurement:

- **Program Characteristics:** descriptions of program features and rationales that comprise the principal candidate's learning experience, such as candidate selection criteria, program standards, program documents, candidate completion requirements, curriculum and coursework, or clinical experience descriptions.
- **Program Outcomes:** measures of immediate program impact on the principal pipeline, such as rates of graduate licensure, candidate graduation and certification rates, job placement—especially in high-need schools—and principal retention. Other outcome data could include candidates' persistence in the program, candidates' success in the program (such as GPA), and candidate graduation rates.

Program outcomes also can include the principal preparation graduates' effectiveness as school leaders after leaving the program, such as performance evaluation ratings, which might provide evidence of the following: impact on teacher effectiveness and retention, school climate, and student achievement and learning, or information from other data sources, including employer satisfaction surveys, graduation rates, and student retention.

Partnership Spotlight

Center for the Evaluation of Educational Leadership Preparation and Practice (CELPE) at the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)

Principal preparation programs vary in both their intended program outcomes and their approach to gathering information about program effects. The CELPE initiative is intended “to make available valid and reliable evaluation research tools, methods, and training materials and strategies for leadership preparation programs” that have a research base and are useful to the continuous improvement of programs. In collaboration with UCEA members throughout the United States, the center offers several program evaluation tools, including *formative and summative evaluation planners* and *INSPIRE surveys* that provide 360-degree data on program quality and graduate impacts on leadership, school conditions, and student learning.

Source: <http://edleaderprep.org/>

Alliance to Reform Education Leadership (AREL) at the George W. Bush Institute

The Alliance to Reform Education Leadership (AREL) at the George W. Bush Institute is a network of 28 principal preparation programs in 15 states and the District of Columbia working on measuring program effectiveness. AREL's network includes 28 principal preparation programs. The preparation programs were selected and assessed against AREL's *Nine Principal Preparation Competencies*, which include a requirement for data collection as part of program evaluation: Each of the 28 programs is sorted into one of three categories based on their level of maturity, effectiveness, and data collection:

- **Exemplary programs** have demonstrated success over time and are considered among the best in the country. The programs are currently collecting and evaluating outcome data on the impact of their graduates on student achievement and seeing positive results.
- **Accelerating programs** have adopted the AREL leadership program element standards and are beginning to collect data on program graduates.
- **Start-up programs** have adopted the AREL leadership program element standards but are still in the process of recruiting and graduating candidates.

The AREL network has begun its work by assessing state-level capacity for collecting and using student learning, school demographic, and human resources information for principal preparation program accountability, and is working on an evaluation of its network programs.

Source: <http://www.bushcenter.org/alliance-reform-education-leadership/arel-network>

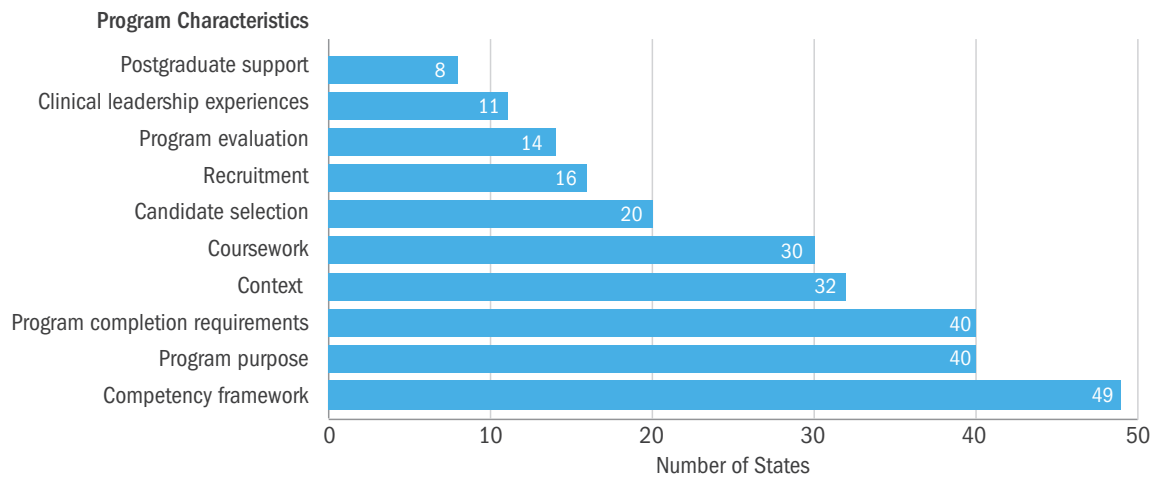
In 2012, AREL launched the *Principal Policy State Survey*, which asked all 50 chief state school officers about a range of principal policies in their states, including principal workforce data collection and state requirements for principal preparation program approval (Briggs et al., 2013). AREL's first report summarizing the survey results, *Operating in the Dark: What Outdated State Policies and Data Gaps Mean For Effective School Leadership*, found that:

- States generally do not use their existing oversight, licensure, and data-monitoring powers to improve school leadership pipelines.
- Many states lack the most basic data for monitoring the supply of principals for schools, such as the number of candidates graduating from programs and obtaining licensure.
- Few states link data on principal effectiveness in schools back to the education programs that prepared them as school leaders.
- Most states are currently unable to distinguish their most successful preparation programs from their least effective ones, which hampers accountability efforts and strategic efforts to improve principal quality.

Relying on AREL's survey data, in Figure 1, we provide a brief overview of the number of states that reported using several different measures of program characteristics as part of their program approval process.¹

¹ The full survey findings are presented in AREL's *Operating in the Dark: What Outdated State Policies and Data Gaps Mean for Effective School Leadership*.

Figure 1. Types of Information on Program Characteristics Required for Program Approval (State Self-Report)²



The chief state school officers responding to the survey noted that the state gathered program quality information on principal preparation programs. As Figure 1 indicates, most states report requiring information on preparation program standards or competency frameworks, program purpose, and program completion requirements. More than half of states also examine program coursework and context; information about candidate selection criteria and processes is less commonly collected—less than half of states say they do so. Information on recruitment efforts, program evaluation practices, clinical leadership experiences, and postgraduate supports is collected in less than a quarter of all states.

With the exception of licensure attainment rates for programs, few chief state school officers commented that their state gathered program outcomes data. Table 1 describes the types of outcome measures that states reported collecting and using as part of principal preparation program approval and reapproval. Between one third and one quarter of all states report collecting data for outcome measures, and even fewer use the data for program approval or reapproval.

Looking for State-by-State Data?

AREL offers two ways to view the survey results for individual states: You can download individual, in-depth state profiles for each state from AREL's [interactive, online map](#) or you can download the information for all 50 states in a [single table](#).

² Note: The AREL survey questions on program approval are structured around AREL's "Nine Principal Preparation Competencies"; because the data are based on state self-report, states likely use additional program characteristics measures beyond those represented in Figure 1.

Table 1. Types of Outcome Measures and Uses (State Self-Report)

	Number of States		
	Ensure Data are Collected*	Use the Measure for Initial Program Approval	Use the Measure for Program Reapproval
Program Outcome Measures			
1. Principal job placement rates	19	7	9
2. Principal retention rates in the job	13	5	6
3. Graduates earning licensure	N/A	24	N/A
4. Principal impact on student learning or achievement	16	8	14
5. Principal evaluation	16	13	11

*Either the state collects the data or requires preparation programs to collect the data.

2. TESTING THE WATERS

What New Accountability Models are States Piloting?

As the AREL report highlighted, most states limit existing evaluation and approval processes to measures of program characteristics. In partnership with other organizations, states are convening stakeholder groups to discuss improving educator preparation accountability. One part of these multifaceted conversations has focused on evaluation methods for principal preparation programs, including possible outcome variables for states to use as part of an accountability model.

An emerging approach is creating annual report cards that are compiled by state education agencies in concert with preparation programs. In the wake of federal Race to the Top awards, several states, such as Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee, committed to developing stronger mechanisms for preparation program accountability that included linking preparation programs with their graduates' performance evaluation data after placement. Although few states are currently far enough along to actually produce this data linkage, the proposed report cards feature data on a range of program outcomes, including program participant satisfaction survey results and program graduate performance evaluation data, such as impacts on school climate, teacher quality, and student learning. For an early example of an online report card, check out North Carolina's [Institutions of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Cards](#).

Did You Know?

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) adopted new accreditation standards for education preparation programs in August 2013. The new standards include a stronger emphasis on developing a “culture of evidence.” To support preparation programs in meeting the new standards, the council released its [CAEP Evidence Guide](#), which explains CAEP's perspective on what a “culture of evidence” looks like in the use of data in educator preparation and accreditation. The guide includes protocols and instructions for collecting and analyzing data, as well as guidance on what constitutes valid evidence and suggestions for collecting evidence on the impact of graduates on student learning. *Source:* <http://caepnet.org/>

Because report cards are compiled annually, they hold promise to provide programs, candidates, and state agency staff with timely and actionable information about program effectiveness. Reapproval processes in most states occur roughly every five to seven years. The data collected as part of the annual report card could contribute to reapproval assessments, but they enable states and programs to collaborate in identifying and acting on program successes and challenges as part of a continuous improvement process.

State Spotlight

Ohio. As part of a broader effort at strengthening program evaluation for educator preparation programs, Ohio's Board of Regents has implemented an annual report card for teacher and principal preparation programs. The report card requires collaboration between the Board of Regents, the Ohio Department of Education, and higher education institutions to share data in order to link the performance of program graduates after they begin serving in schools. The state took a collaborative approach to the development of the report cards, inviting 13 public and 38 private educator preparation institutions to participate in the development process. The report card includes the following measures:

- Licensure test scores
- Value-added data (schoolwide for administrators)
- Candidate academic measures
- Field and clinical experiences
- Preservice candidate survey results
- Resident educator survey results
- Resident educator persistence data
- Excellence and innovation initiatives (which could include placement rates in hard-to-staff schools)
- National accreditation

Source: https://www.ohiohighered.org/2013_ohio_educator_performance_reports#overview

Partnership Spotlight

Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has selected seven states—Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Washington—to participate in NTEP, a two-year pilot focused on transforming educator preparation and entry systems into the profession. With support from 17 national organizations, NTEP is helping states take action in three key policy areas: licensure, program approval, and analyzing and reporting information to improve preparation programs (CCSSO, 2013).

The NTEP pilot builds on policy recommendations developed by CCSSO's Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession, which included nine state chiefs and members from the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). The recommendations include actions that states should take to improve the rigor of principal preparation program approval and to better support preparation programs in collecting data through multiple measures of program quality and effectiveness.



CHARTING YOUR COURSE

Guiding Questions for Establishing a Collaborative Model in Your State

Developing measures that are sound and useful for preparation program review, assessment, and improvement requires a collaborative approach. The key to any successful effort at improving school leader preparation is collaboration between state education agency staff, institutions of higher education, preparation programs, and districts (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). The following questions are designed for state education agency staff to consider as they initiate reforms to principal preparation program accountability. Not all questions may be applicable to your state context. Choose the questions that fit your needs.

Clarify Your Vision and Goals

- What legislative or regulatory mandates do you need to ensure that you meet?
- What is the primary purpose of your state's efforts in evaluating program effectiveness (e.g., accountability, consumer information, continuous improvement)?
- What is the broader vision of improving school leadership that will guide your selection of performance measures?
- What are the program characteristic outcomes that are high priorities for your stakeholders and your state context?

Assemble Your Partners

- Who should be at the table to ensure you select appropriate measures and that you can eventually collect the necessary data to assess program effectiveness?
- What commitments should be expected from different stakeholder groups and how can you make those clear in advance?
- What supports can you provide to stakeholders to promote their participation?
- Who are the school leadership preparation innovators in your region or state and how can you invite them to share their lessons learned?

Map Out Policy Alignments

- What other principal pipeline policies and initiatives are under way in your state?
- What other data systems and education reforms might influence the availability of measures (e.g., K-20 longitudinal data, educator evaluation)?
- How will you communicate and collaborate across state agencies involved in educator pipeline reform to ensure all reforms are part of an aligned and coherent policy?

Inventory Your Data

- What data does your state already collect that could inform measures of leadership preparation program effectiveness?
- What is the quality of data already being collected?
- What new data might need to be collected? How will you develop or procure the data you need?
- How will the data be used (e.g., for accountability, for funding decisions, to provide targeted supports)?
- What data do preparation programs already collect and what new data should they collect?
- What new data quality assurance processes might need to be developed to improve the accuracy and reliability of the data?
- What technology or infrastructure barriers need to be addressed to collect data for your selected measures?
- Who will collect and house the data? How do your state's regulations on public requests for information impact who would be best to collect and house the data?

Select Your Measures

- What sources of evidence will provide accurate and useful information on the most important aspects of principal preparation?
- How will you ensure the measures selected provide information on key areas of interest for your state? (e.g., If high-need schools are a key priority area, are your measures designed to capture data on how many principals are placed in high-need schools, whether they stay there, and if they feel they were well prepared to lead in that context?)
- What information is available about the validity and reliability of the different measures under consideration? Are there any potential unintended consequences that might be associated with using the measures?
- For measures of principal impact on student learning, what evidence is available that the selected student performance measures are reliable but also valid measures of preparation program impact?
- Which measures may require a longer timeline for adoption and use (e.g., value-added measurement requires a minimum of three years of data on a single program candidate)?
- How will the data for each measure be analyzed and combined to make decisions about program quality and effectiveness?

Plan for Continuous Improvement and Transparency

- Who will analyze the data on program effectiveness?
- Who is responsible for acting on the data collected on program effectiveness?
- Do those responsible for analyzing and using data have the capacity to do so?
- What supports are needed to facilitate the process of translating newly collected evidence into improved practice?
- How will you monitor the program approval and accreditation system to ensure it is improved on an ongoing basis using information on the quality of data and measures being used?
- How will you gather rigorous feedback from stakeholders on the program approval and accreditation system throughout implementation?
- Will you share program performance data with stakeholders? If yes, in what format?
- How will you ensure that stakeholders using results from the program approval and accreditation system interpret the results appropriately?
- How will you assess the impact of the accountability model on preparation program effectiveness?

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I WANT TO KNOW MORE!

Bonus Resources

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For more examples or information on this topic, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org.

Nick Yoder is a content lead for the GTL Center and a technical assistance consultant at American Institutes for Research.

Dryw Freed provides technical assistance for the GTL Center and is a test development specialist at American Institutes for Research.

Jenni Feters is the communications lead for the GTL Center and a researcher at American Institutes for Research.