

Why Diversity in Leadership Matters

ISBE Department of District and School Leadership
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ISBE's DDSL created this deck to highlight the critical role that diversity in district and school leadership plays in improving student and school outcomes.

OVERVIEW

- **The research is clear:** Diversifying district and school leadership in Illinois benefits all students, particularly students with identities that are underrepresented among leaders.
- ISBE's Department of District and School Leadership (DDSL) created a [Work Plan](#) that was informed by research and focused on **recruitment, mentoring, and improving conditions** to foster a robust leadership pipeline that reflects the rich diversity of Illinois' students.
- ISBE, the DDSL and stakeholders around the state are placing **diversity in leadership** at the center of their work to ensure **better outcomes for students** -- especially students who are underrepresented -- **and schools**.

OBJECTIVES

- **This deck's objectives are to:**
 - + Highlight the critical role diverse, effective leadership plays in improving student and school outcomes.
 - + Promote a shared understanding of why diverse leadership matters.

Research shows that diverse, effective leadership is key for improving student and school outcomes.



Effective district and school leaders have an **outsized influence** on student and school outcomes.



Research shows that when leadership is diverse and representative of student diversity, the positive impacts of effective leadership are **magnified for all students**, especially students who are underrepresented among leaders, and entire schools.



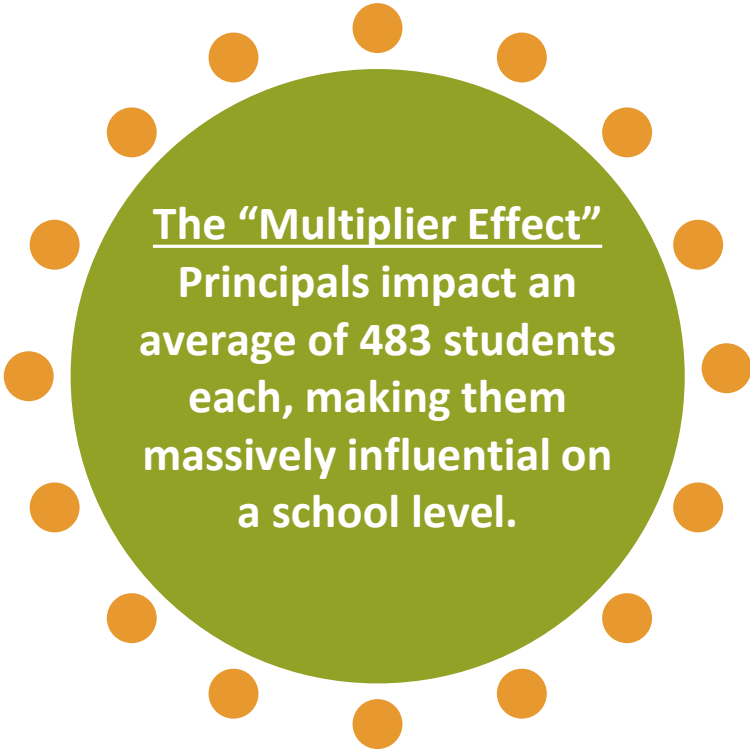
However, like many other states, Illinois' district and school leaders do not reflect the rich diversity of its students, particularly in terms of **race, ethnicity, gender, and languages spoken**.



The DDSL is partnering with and supporting stakeholders to **foster a more diverse leadership pipeline** so all students and schools can benefit from these positive impacts.

The following slides will share more on the impacts of diverse, effective leadership on students and schools.

For decades, researchers have agreed that great teaching has the greatest impact on students, followed by effective school leaders who are “multipliers” of positive student outcomes.



Replacing a below-average principal with an above-average* principal leads to:

2.9

additional months of **math** learning gains for students per year

2.7

additional months of **reading** learning gains for students per year



a greater impact than **66%** of math interventions and **50%** of reading interventions for students

*Note: “Above-average principal” means at the 75th percentile of effectiveness, while “below-average principal” means at the 25th percentile (Grissom et al., 2021).

When effective leaders use their outsized influence well, they create a ripple effect of positive teacher outcomes, student outcomes and a healthy culture in their schools and districts.

Grissom et al. (2021) highlight **four major skills shared by the most effective district and school leaders**, including what these skills look like in practice and their results.

Interpersonal Skills: Building a positive school climate

Instructional Skills: Focusing on instruction with teachers

Collaboration Skills: Facilitating teamwork and professional development

Organizational Skills: Managing systems and people well

Lower teacher turnover

More effective teaching

Positive school culture

Researchers describe effective leadership as “**the catalyst** for long-term improvement” (Herman et al.) and “a critical bridge between most educational-reform initiatives, and having those reforms **make a genuine difference** for all students.” (Leithwood et al.).

Leadership that is both diverse and effective has even more positive impacts on students and schools than effective leadership alone.

Many definitions of diversity exist, both in terms of race and other dimensions of identity.

According to Equity in the Center, diversity can include many different dimensions of identity, including any ways in which people are different from each other socially, physically, economically, ideologically, and psychologically.



Given the positive impacts of diverse district and school leadership on students and schools, leadership should reflect the rich diversity of students across many dimensions of identity.

ISBE's DDSL is specifically focused on closing leadership representation gaps in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and language due to the disproportionately low number of Latina/o/x, Black, women, and multilingual leaders in Illinois relative to those student populations.

The DDSL is specifically focused on race, ethnicity, gender, and language, but it acknowledges that other representation gaps are also important and encourages partners to address whichever gaps are most relevant to their communities. For example, diversity can include:

- Socioeconomic background
- Geographic background (e.g., rural)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religion

By the end of the 2022-23 school year, the DDSL aims to increase the number of candidates who are diverse in these ways **by 10%** and increase their retention rates **by 5%**.

Illinois has improved representation of girls and Black students among principals, though they remain underrepresented among superintendents; the largest representation gaps exist for Latina/o/x students.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF ILLINOIS STUDENTS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

50%

of Illinois students are girls, while 54% of principals are women but only 26.3% of superintendents are women (2021)

26.6%

of Illinois students are Latina/o/x, while 5.9% of principals and 1.1% of superintendents are (2021)

16.6%

of Illinois students are Black, while 13.8% of principals and 5.5% of superintendents are (2021)

12.5%

of Illinois students primarily speak a language other than English (2020); in districts where a higher percentage of students speak multiple languages, it becomes even more valuable to have leaders who do too

The DDSL and partners can improve academic, emotional and career outcomes for all students by fostering a more diverse leadership pipeline in Illinois.

Academic Outcomes

When students have both **“mirrors”** and **“windows”** at school -- a place to see themselves reflected and opportunities to look through other perspectives -- they have better academic experiences and outcomes. Research indicates that this is in part because leaders from diverse backgrounds hold higher expectations of students from diverse backgrounds. For example, principals of color encourage more students of color to enroll in **advanced coursework**, and **attendance rates increase** among students of color.

Emotional Outcomes

Principals from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds improve emotional outcomes for students, especially students who are underrepresented among district and school leaders. For example, leaders of color reduce the number of Black and Latina/o/x students mistakenly referred to **special education** and discourage zero-tolerance **discipline policies** that disproportionately affect and criminalize Black students.

Principals who support and reflect students’ identities can also influence student outcomes by working with teachers on **culturally responsive teaching and hiring teachers of color**, practices that positively influence all students.

Career Outcomes

Teachers and leaders frequently cite being **“tapped on the shoulder”** as their reason for entering the education profession, so leaders who share identities with students show students that they can be the **next generation of great educators and leaders** and encourage them to become so.

Diverse leadership also has significant benefits for schools, including recruitment, retention, climate, and community.

Recruitment



Diverse leaders diversify the teacher workforce. For example, principals of color tend to hire slightly more teachers of color than White principals do, leading to a **greater proportion of educators at school** being “mirrors and windows” for underrepresented students, which improves student outcomes.

Retention



Retention rates increase among teachers who share identities with leaders. Black teachers have **higher retention rates** when working with Black principals, as do women teachers with women principals, a highly valuable outcome given the disproportionately lower retention rates of Black teachers and the national teacher shortage.

Climate



School climate improves among teachers who share identities with leaders: Women teachers rate their **job satisfaction and trust in leadership** more highly when working with principals who are also women.

Community



Diverse leaders connect deeply with their school communities and often hold strong cultural and social capital. When leaders share identities and experiences (such as race, language, socioeconomic, or rural background) with their communities, they foster **deeper parent and family engagement**, which in turn leads to better outcomes for students.

The DDSL developed a Work Plan that was informed by the literature and its own research* focused on fostering a more robust and diverse leadership pipeline.

As described in its Work Plan, the DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit, retain, and improve conditions for leaders. The DDSL's theory of action identifies three critical goal areas that will lead to an increased number of diverse leaders in Illinois.

If DDSL Partners and Supports Stakeholders to...

- 1 **Recruit** a robust and diverse leader pipeline
- 2 **Retain** district and school leaders through **strong mentoring**
- 3 **Improve** conditions for leaders

While...

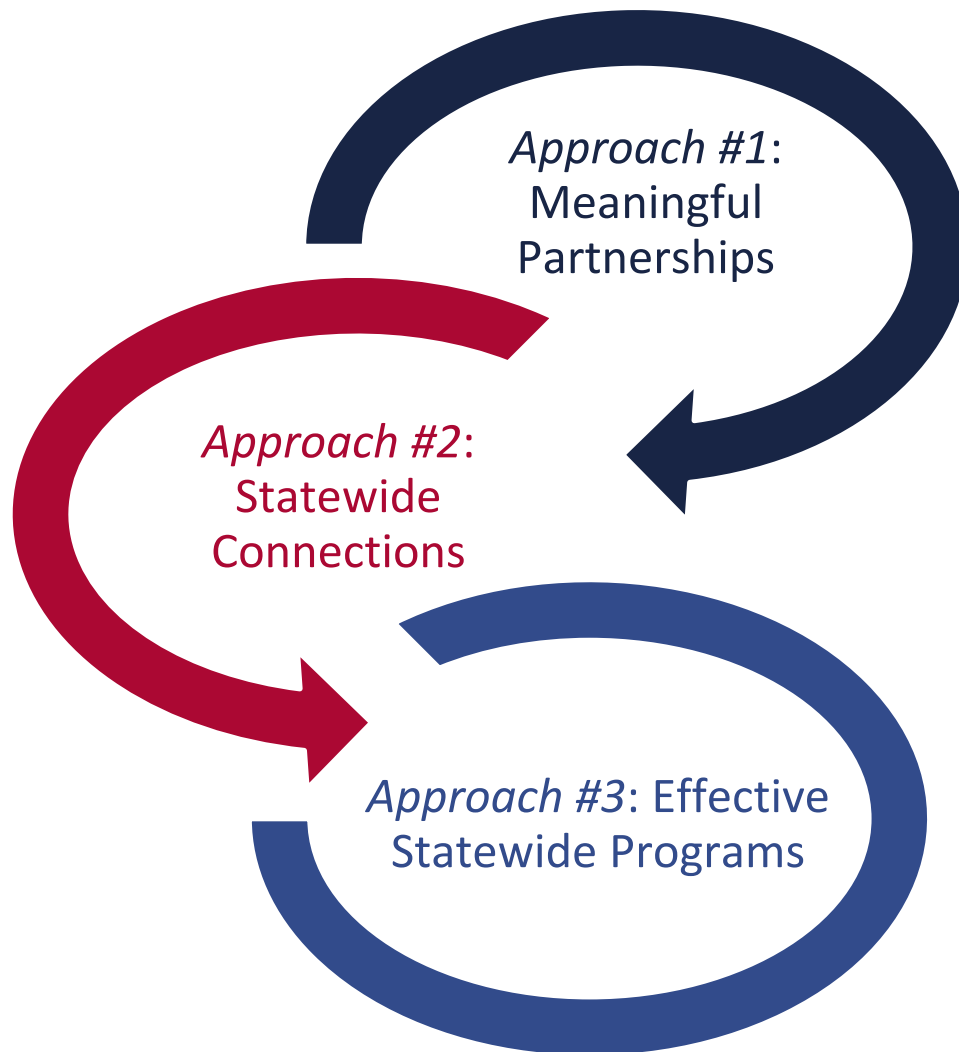
keeping **equity** and **diversity** at the center

Then...

By end of the 2022-23 school year, the number of diverse leader candidates across the state will increase by 10% and principal retention will increase by 5%.

*Note: In 2021, the DDSL conducted research on district and school leadership in Illinois, holding discussions with a 14-member Advisory Group of key stakeholders and conducting four focus groups with practitioners to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for district and school leadership.

The DDSL is utilizing three intertwined approaches to foster a diverse, effective leadership pipeline in Illinois.



The DDSL is developing **statewide principal recruitment and mentoring programs**. To learn more about the programs, reach out to the DDSL.

To learn about how the **DDSL is partnering with stakeholders to foster a diverse leadership pipeline**, visit the DDSL Work Plan [Executive Summary](#) or the full [Work Plan](#).

If you're interested in partnering with the Department of District and School Leadership or have any questions, please contact the department.

We look forward to collaborating with organizations and stakeholders across the state to pursue these goals, whether as grantees or partners who want to get involved in other ways!

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Thank you!

