

**Work Plan for the Illinois Department of
District/School Leadership
at the Illinois State Board of Education**

June 2021



The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) seeks to equip each and every child to live life to its fullest

VISION



Each and every child is equipped to make meaningful contributions to society and live life to its fullest potential.

MISSION



*Provide each and every child with **safe and healthy learning conditions, great educators, and equitable opportunities** by practicing data-informed stewardship of resources and policy development, all done in partnership with educators, families, and stakeholders.*

ISBE's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan committed to developing a district/school leadership department

Strategy 3.2: Establish a school/district leadership department that will support the recruitment of a diverse leadership pipeline with a focus on race and culturally responsive leadership

By end of the 2020-21 school year

The school/district leadership department will be established

By end of the 2021-22 school year

The number of diverse leader candidates across the state will increase by 5%

By end of the 2022-23 school year

The number of diverse leader candidates across the state will increase by 10%

In late 2020, ISBE established the Department of District and School Leadership (DDSL) to strengthen and diversify the leadership pipeline in Illinois

VISION



*The Department of District and School Leadership will partner with stakeholders **to foster a robust leadership pipeline** that **reflects the diversity** of our students.*

MISSION



*DDSL will support stakeholders as they **recruit, coach** and **retain** high-quality, equity-minded education leaders* who support and reflect the diversity of our students.*

*Equity-minded leaders are district and school leaders who apply an equity lens to their leadership practices and who approach their work with equity as a central concern. Equity-minded leaders are concerned with meeting the needs historically underrepresented student groups. For example, equity-minded leaders consider how “equity can make schools more inclusive and instruction more culturally responsive.” To learn more about equity-minded leaders, see [“How Principals Affect Students and Schools”](#) by the Wallace Foundation.

The DDSL's mission and vision inform its theory of action, which is the foundation of the DDSL's Work Plan

If DDSL Partners and Supports Stakeholders to...

While...

Then...

1

Recruit a robust and diverse leader pipeline

2

Retain district and school leaders through strong mentoring

3

Improve conditions for leaders

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

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%.

This deck presents the ISBE Department of District & School Leadership's Work Plan to strengthen and diversify the district and school leadership pipeline in Illinois

The DDSL will pursue three goal areas with a focus on equity, diversity and partnership





1 | Recruit a robust and diverse leadership pipeline

Goal *The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit more leaders who support and reflect student diversity into the district and school leadership pipeline*

Strategies

<p>Serve as a bully pulpit to elevate leadership roles as attractive and attainable, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity and in high need areas</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to incentivize leaders who support and reflect student diversity to enter the pipeline</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Support the creation or improvement of early pathways, such as grow your own models for teachers, particularly in high need areas</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Support and help place equity-minded leader candidates, particularly leaders who support and reflect student diversity, into leadership roles</p> <p>4</p>
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Measures of success

<p>Number of candidates statewide who support and reflect student diversity</p>	<p>Number of candidates statewide who support and reflect student diversity entering new principal positions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5% increase by the end of 2021-2022 school year 10% increase by the end of 2022-2023 school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of candidates who support and reflect student diversity entering new principal positions



2 | Retain leaders through strong mentoring

Goal

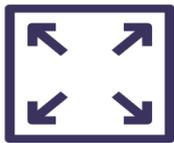
The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to retain leaders through strong mentoring, especially for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Strategies

<p>Recruit highly effective new principal mentors, especially mentors who support and reflect student diversity, in under-resourced schools and high need areas</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Support the implementation of rigorous mentor selection to identify highly effective mentors who support and reflect the rich diversity of students</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Support the implementation of high-quality training that prepares mentors and principals with a culturally responsive lens</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Utilize technologies to connect new principals with mentors across diverse geographies (e.g., connecting urban and rural principals) and to create peer learning opportunities for mentors and mentees</p> <p>4</p>
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Measures of success

<p>Improved principal outcomes and school climate</p>	<p>Post-COVID new principal support</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increase in principal satisfaction and retention▪ Increase in access to professional learning for new principals▪ Improved school culture and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Support for new principals who face challenges related to returning to full in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year



3 | Improve conditions for leaders

Goal *The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to improve conditions for leaders to increase retention, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity*

Strategies

<p>Elevate a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism across the pipeline, such as in hiring and placement practices</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to address pressures of the superintendent and principal roles, such as with distributive leadership structures</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Support the implementation of rigorous mentor training for superintendents, with an eye to effectively supporting principals, especially principals who support and reflect student diversity</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Collect, analyze and share actionable data related to the leadership pipeline</p> <p>4</p>
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Measures of success

Improved principal outcomes	Improved superintendent mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increase in principal satisfaction and retention, disaggregated by identity markers (e.g., race, ethnicity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhanced support for new superintendents through New Superintendent Mentoring program

Investing in these three goal areas will help the state progress on two critical outcomes

Long-Term Outcomes

More candidates who support and reflect student diversity will enter the pipeline

More leaders who support and reflect student diversity will be retained

Measures

Number of candidates in the pipeline who support and reflect student diversity

Retention rates of leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Targets

By the end of **SY21-22:**
Increase by 5%

By the end of **SY22-23:**
Increase by 10%

By the end of **SY22-23:**
Increase by 5%

By the end of **SY23-24:**
Increase by 10%

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1 | Background and Methodology

- WHAT WAS THE IMPETUS FOR THE DDSL'S WORK PLAN?
- WHICH RESEARCH APPROACHES WERE TAKEN?

The Illinois State Board of Education's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan committed to developing a district/school leadership department

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In late 2020, the Illinois State Board of Education established the Department of District and School Leadership (DDSL) to strengthen and diversify the leadership pipeline in Illinois



Marty McGreal
Director

Marty McGreal has worked in public education since 1992, serving in CPS as a teacher, curriculum director, assistant principal and principal. He has also worked in New Orleans assisting in community school redesign after Hurricane Katrina, served as Director for the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center, and oversaw schools in Louisiana, Tennessee and Illinois as Director for Pathways in Education.



Tammy Hermes
*Consultant**

Tammy Hermes has over 20 years of experience in education, including as an elementary reading specialist, instructional coach, high school principal and P8 principal. She brings her experience in multiple district types, social emotional learning, professional development, and principal mentoring to the new DDSL as a consultant.



Patrick Rice
*Consultant**

Dr. Patrick Rice is a Clinical Assistant Professor for the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois, with previous experience as a Field Services/Equity Director, principal, superintendent and U.S. history teacher. A prolific author, Dr. Rice has published three books and over 25 professional publications in school governance, leadership and parent/community involvement.

**Temporarily funded by a grant from Illinois State University*

The DDSL – in partnership with Education First – designed a research effort to inform the Department’s Work Plan

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The DDSL seeks to understand the current needs of the IL district and school leadership pipeline and how it might best position itself to meet the needs of stakeholders.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1 Current Context



What is the current state of the leadership pipeline in Illinois? What needs do district and school leaders and other stakeholders have?

2 Opportunities



What opportunities exist to address the key challenges facing the Illinois district and school leadership pipeline?

3 Implications for DDSL



What implications do the current context and opportunities have for the DDSL? What strategies should it pursue to strengthen and diversify the leadership pipeline in Illinois?

The DDSL and Education First investigated these research questions across four phases, and analyzed data using online research, document review & interviews and focus groups with stakeholders



Phase 1: Launch & Initial Research

Review position papers

Review stakeholder position papers and other materials to understand the current landscape related to the IL district/school leadership pipeline

Literature review

Review literature to identify best practices and models from the field

Phase 2: Initial Stakeholder Engagement

Advisory Group

Identify racially and geographically diverse Advisory Group members

Advisory Group interviews

Conduct individual interviews with Advisory Group members

Focus groups

Conduct 4 focus groups with principals, superintendents, prep programs and other school-based leaders

Phase 3: Work Plan Development

Draft DDSL work plan

Draft DDSL work plan based on initial research and stakeholder engagement

Advisory Group meetings

Collect input from the Advisory Group on the draft work plan

Focus group follow-up

Collect input on the draft work plan from a subset of focus group participants

Phase 4: Work Plan Launch

Finalize DDSL work plan

Finalize the DDSL work plan with input from stakeholders

Implementation engagement

Identify short- and long-term activities with a focus on partnership

Additional Advisory Group engagement

Continue to engage the Advisory Group for implementation input and partnership

The 14-member Advisory Group included leaders in district & school leadership who reflect the rich racial and geographic diversity of our state

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

- **Allen Bearden**, President & Teacher, Jackie Vaughn Graduate School for Teacher Leadership, Chicago State University
- **Brent Clark**, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Administrators
- **Carole Collins Ayanlaja**, Assistant Professor, Dept of Educational Leadership, Eastern Illinois University
- **Daniel Booth**, Superintendent, Carbondale Elementary School District No. 95
- **David Ardrey**, Executive Director, Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools
- **Devon Horton**, Superintendent, Evanston/Skokie 16
- **Ed Howerton**, President-Elect, Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration
- **Elizabeth Minor**, Associate Professor & Education Program Chair, NLU Principal Preparation
- **Erika Hunt**, Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher, Center for the Study of Educational Policy
- **Jason Leahy**, Executive Director, Illinois Principals Association
- **Maria Burgos**, Board Secretary, Illinois Association of Latino Administrators
- **Mark Klaisner**, Executive Director, Illinois Regional Office of Education, West 40
- **Minerva Garcia-Sanchez**, Incoming Superintendent, Chicago Public Schools Area Chief
- **Tom Bertrand**, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Boards

The Advisory Group provided thought partnership in identifying strategies that position the Department to strengthen and diversify the Illinois leadership pipeline

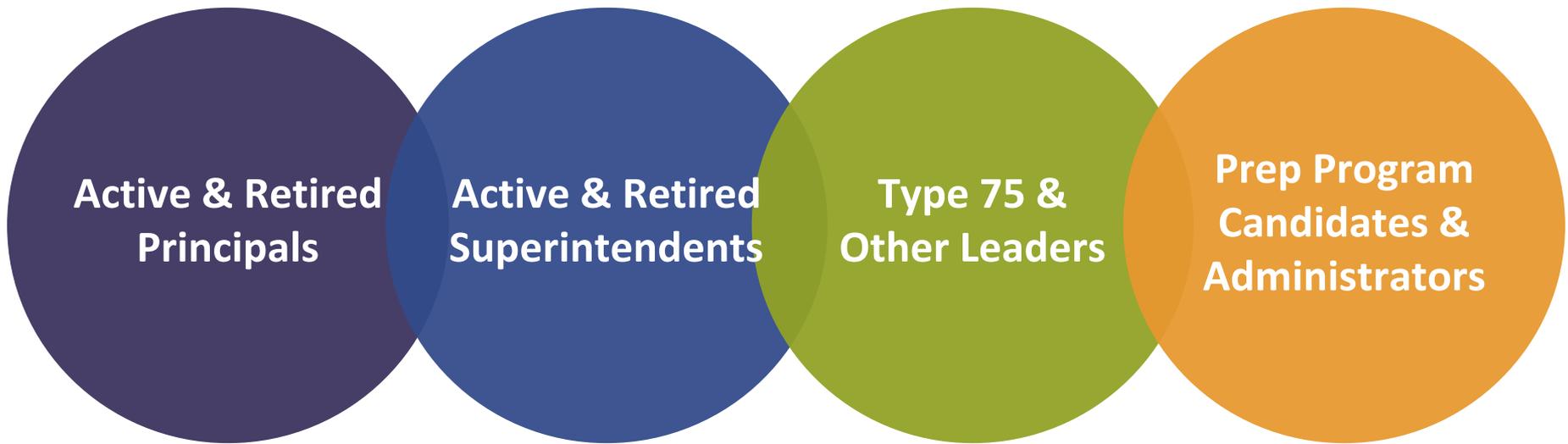
The Advisory Group's objectives are to:

- Understand the key challenges facing Illinois regarding district and school leadership
- Identify and prioritize opportunities to strengthen and diversify district and school leadership in Illinois
- Identify and prioritize strategies that ISBE's Department of District and School Leadership might pursue to support organizations and school systems to strengthen and diversify district and school leadership in Illinois, in partnership with stakeholders and with a focus on equity and diversity



The DDSL conducted individual interviews with Advisory Group members and convened the whole group twice to provide input into the DDSL Work Plan development.

The DDSL also conducted four focus groups to learn more about district and school leadership from aspiring, active and retired district and school leaders directly



Focus group participants reflected the rich racial and geographic diversity of our state and continue to be valued partners to the DDSL.



2 | Context and Opportunity

- WHAT IS THE LANDSCAPE OF DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN ILLINOIS?
- WHAT OPPORTUNITIES CAN THE DEPARTMENT LEVERAGE?

Illinois has been at the forefront of innovation and improvement in district and school leadership for the past 20 years

ILLINOIS DISTRICT & SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Stakeholders across the state are **working together** to recruit, place, support and retain district and school leaders, and have demonstrated many learnings that can inform future efforts



In 2010, Illinois lawmakers passed IL Public Act 096-0903 which transformed principal preparation and introduced a new principal endorsement focused on the specific competencies and knowledge principals need to be effective in their role



Illinois has received numerous national awards and recognitions, including the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation by the Education Commission of the States in 2014



The DDSL seeks to partner with stakeholders to continue Illinois' legacy as a leader in district and school leadership.

Source: [Center for the Study of Education Policy \(2020\)](#)

Despite its successes, Illinois is currently facing a crisis in its district and school leadership pipeline

The Current State

School systems across the state are struggling to recruit and retain highly effective, equity-minded district and school leaders, particularly in rural areas, high-need areas and hard-to-staff school systems.

Major Challenges

The district and school leader shortage is in part due to challenges with:

- **Declining enrollment** in principal preparation programs, exacerbated by persistent educator shortages
- **Lack of consistency and clarity in role descriptions and expectations**, which can disincentivize prospective leaders and impact retention rates of current leaders
- **Preparation programs only recently narrowed their focus to the principal role**, rather than a broader administrative leadership focus
- **Inconsistency in the provision and quality of mentoring** and induction programs for new leaders
- **Lack of attention to diversity and equity** in recruitment, preparation and retention of leaders, resulting in gaps between leader diversity and student diversity

Opportunities

There are multiple opportunities across the state to recruit, prepare, place, mentor and retain equity-minded leaders, particularly those who support and reflect student diversity:

- **Leverage and connect existing organizations and resources**, such as professional networks and regional offices of education
- **Support preparation programs and school systems** to embed diversity, equity and antiracism in their practices and programs
- **Disseminate best practices and lessons learned** from successful partnerships and programs across the state
- **Utilize technology to connect leaders** with peers and mentors across diverse geographies (e.g., connecting rural and urban leaders)

The DDSL seeks to address these challenges by partnering with and supporting leaders, prep programs, professional networks and other stakeholders to capitalize on opportunities to strengthen and diversify the district and school leadership pipeline in Illinois.

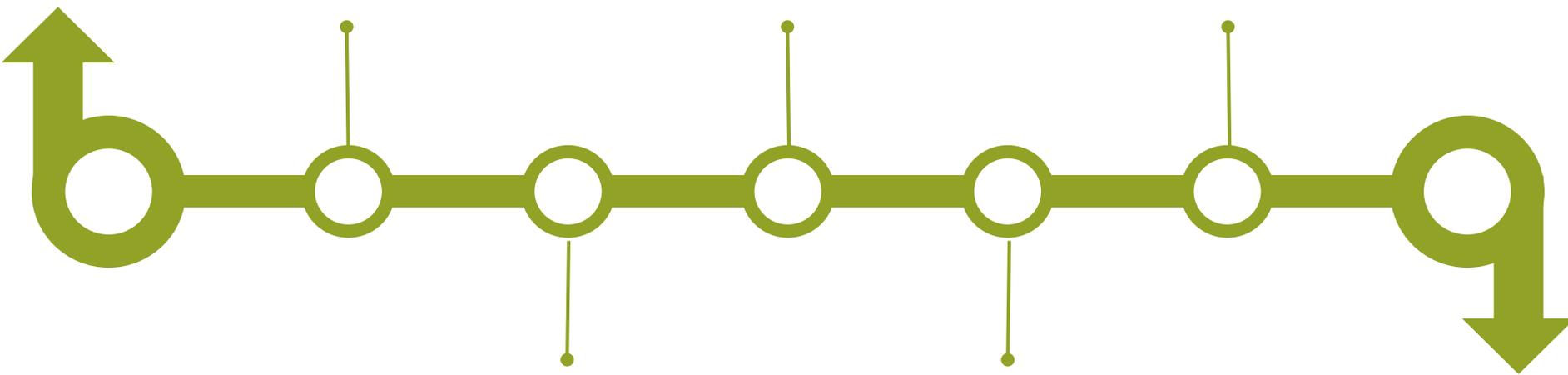
Recruitment

Placement

Retention

Preparation

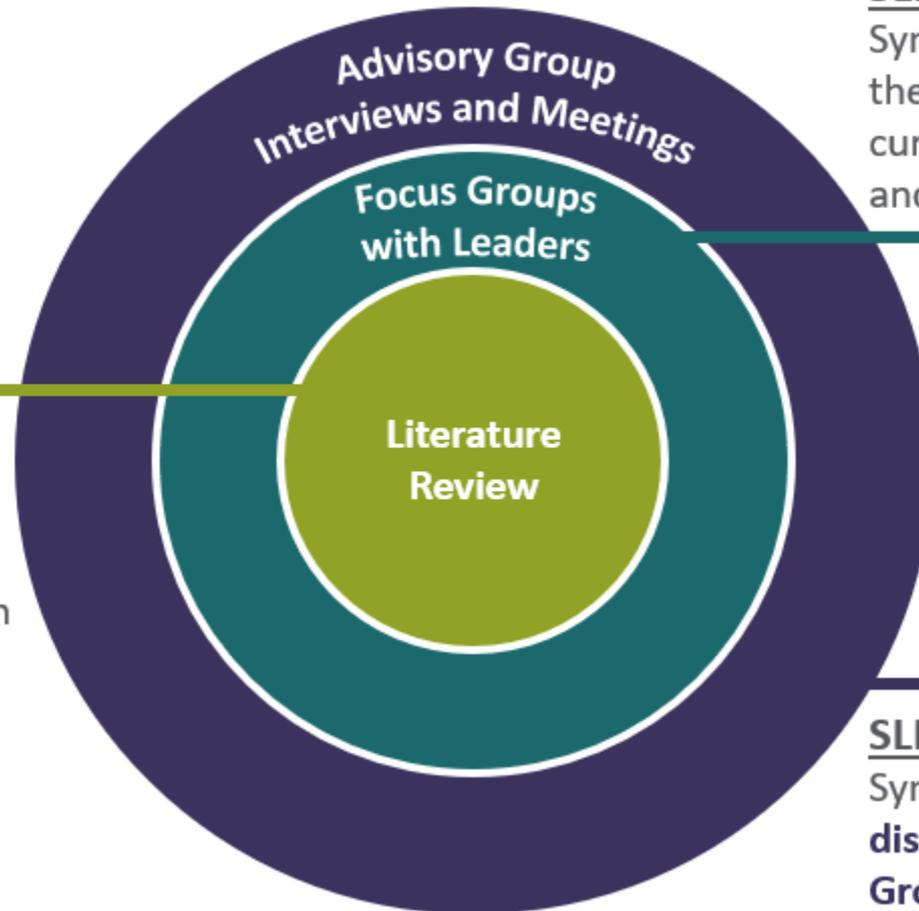
Mentoring



3 | Research Findings

- WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS NEED?
- WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY THE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE?
- WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DDSL?

The research findings are organized into three areas to represent the multiple layers of research gathered about district and school leadership in Illinois



SLIDE 23

Trends from the **literature**, including stakeholder position papers and other desk research

SLIDES 24-29

Synthesis of findings from the **four focus groups** with current and retired leaders, and prep programs*

*Note: A complete peer synthesis can be found in Appendix B (slide 70).

SLIDES 30-31

Synthesis of findings from the **discussions with Advisory Group members****

**Note: A complete synthesis of interviews can be found in Appendix A (slide 60).

The literature review revealed that the leadership pipeline in Illinois is drying up, in part due to five critical trends



Source: *The Wallace Foundation*; *Center for the Study of Education Policy*; *Illinois Principals Association*; *Illinois School Leadership Advisory Council*; *The School Leader Collaborative*

In focus groups, the DDSL asked leaders to share their perspectives on these and other challenges, as well as on opportunities to strengthen and diversify the pipeline

Category	Selected Questions
1 Background	What is the most important part of a leader's job to get right?
2 Preparation	What is one thing prep programs should continue/start doing to improve how they train aspiring leaders ? What experiences or prep must leaders have to be successful?
3 Challenges & Supports	What are the unique opportunities and challenges that current/aspiring leaders of color face? How does equity manifest in your practice ? What are the biggest gaps that current leaders have, and what supports are most important to address them?
4 Recruitment	What are the best ways to recruit leaders, especially leaders of color, into the role? What is your advice for how ISBE can help to diversify the leader pipeline ? What barriers have discouraged you from seeking to become a leader?
5 Retention	What were the most helpful supports that contributed to your success and retention in a leader role? What are the most effective strategies to retain leaders, especially leaders of color, in their roles for 5+ years?

The focus groups highlighted four critical strategy areas

RECRUITMENT

- Leverage relational nature of recruitment, while ensuring candidates of color are being effectively drawn into leader roles
- Address systemic bias in leader hiring
- Build a public relations campaign
- Encourage creative, proactive recruitment of candidates of color

PREPARATION

- Support prep programs to build leadership skills in candidates and provide critical supports to candidates of color
- Understand how to help leaders operationalize an equity lens
- Help prep programs and districts partner to give aspiring leaders diverse practicum experiences & build networks statewide

HIRING & EARLY SUPPORTS

- Support multi-year cohort mentoring for new leaders
- Offer scholarships to new leaders, esp. leaders of color, for executive coaching and professional development
- Connect with organizations like the IPA for additional support

LONG-TERM RETENTION

- Encourage leaders to join statewide professional networks
- Convene and support networks, esp. for leaders of color
- Collect and distribute resources for districts and school boards to improve organizational culture and equitable practices

1 | Recruitment practices are promising but need expansion

THEMES

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

1 Principal recruitment is highly relational, informal & not systematic.

My principal came to me and asked whether I had thought about becoming a building principal. **It hadn't even dawned on me [until then].**

No one tells you that you can do this job as a kid [of color]. You don't dream that big because you don't know any better.

2 Candidates of color do pursue the principal role, but experience significant barriers

I used to be very interested in becoming a principal, and now I'm not at all. I wanted to work in my district, applied 3 times, and didn't get it. **I have no desire to lead in Illinois anymore.**

I've seen a **district "nepotism" [in hiring].**

They say they want to hire [people of color], **but when you interview, it is different.**

3 The current narrative around education & leadership can dissuade potential leaders of color.

[The perception of] **"I don't wanna be a broke-ass teacher" makes it hard to recruit kids** into education.

The reason why there's such a dearth of people of color pursuing education is because many of them have had traumatic experiences at school. **Why would they go back into a traumatic environment?**

4 LEAs/programs can be more proactive in seeking candidates of color & also hire recruiters of color

We're not looking hard enough for [candidates of color]. [My] supe said we can't find any applicants of color and I thought, how hard are we trying? Did we go to HBCUs or are we just taking applicants from the pile?

Many colleges have an intent to recruit people of color, but no people of color are involved. **I can't see myself at this program if no one recruiting looks like me.**

2 | High-quality prep must include equity and relational skills

THEMES

1 Strong prep supports leaders to be visionary, emotionally aware & community oriented

2 Aspiring leaders of color face unique challenges during preparation

3 Programs don't have a shared understanding of how candidates should build & operationalize an 'equity lens'

4 Effective preparation provides principals with diverse experiences and a true understanding of what the job is like

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

One of the things I ask in principal interviews is what are you willing to get fired for? **What do you care enough about that you're willing to plant your flag?**

When principals don't succeed, it's not because they're not smart. **Either they lack self-awareness, or can't foster positive, productive working relationships.**

For interns [of color] in a majority white school, that's a heavy burden [to bear].

A unique challenge is **"racial battle fatigue"** ... e.g. dealing with microaggressions ... [Sometimes we get] pigeonholed into the discipline track and don't develop instructional leadership chops.

We don't share understanding of what equity looks like in a school context. [We must] embed practices and instructional delivery to **force [candidates] to critically reflect on their own understandings, beliefs, biases, so they're more self-aware when they step into leadership with people who don't look like them.** Oppressive leaders only see deficits, not assets.

The thing that benefitted me the most was being able to **connect with people from all over the state** and finding out how different people did different things.

I've gone to some colleges to speak to new principal groups, **and I always make sure to include a day in the life of a principal.** In your programs, you're doing these projects and reading texts, but it's like, "boom!" when you get in.

3 | Hiring practices are excluding leaders of color and new leaders

THEMES

1 Aspiring leaders, especially women leaders of color, experience bias and inconsistency in the hiring process

2 New leaders of color deal with the extra burden of being tokenized/"the first" in their roles

3 Early supports, e.g. mentoring, are critical to equip new leaders, esp. leaders of color

4 Targeted, multi-year cohort mentoring for new leaders is effective but in some cases, stigmatized

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

[Districts] hide behind policies but are **willing to shift these and accept mediocrity from white people instead of accepting a phenomenal Black educator** who will disrupt [the status quo].

When I applied for principalships.... **In some instances, race did play a role** [and in other cases] some people were pulled to the side and told the district isn't ready for a female...

[Leaders of color] are placed on every committee to **get "diversity" checked off.**

Many times when a person of color assumes a leadership role, they may be the first one, and **when you are the first you carry a lot of weight on your shoulders...** That's why networking is absolutely critical and you need connections that allow you to thrive, not just survive.

The job is only lonely at the top if you allow it to be... **Superintendents have been the most supportive peer group I have ever had in my life.**

Everybody needs a buddy; it feels better when I can call my friend who is a principal at another town and we engage on a regular basis... **Collaboration and learning from others support new principals.**

Provide a simple grant to districts, and leaders who apply for it just get it. Some leaders think [coaching is] a sign of weakness, and it's not desirable or accepted yet. There's a rebranding part to this that symbolizes that **we know this is important.**

I think we do a good job of coaching when you first get there... and then you're out on your own. **You need ongoing support...** Start small with a cohort of people, coach them for three years, and bring it to scale.

4 | Social and financial supports contribute greatly to retention

THEMES

1 Formal and informal networks are central to retention, especially for leaders of color

2 All leaders require ongoing support, focused on equitable practice, for long-term effectiveness and retention

3 Financial incentives could support retention of leaders of color

4 Statewide diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism training could create belonging for leaders of color

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

We need to broaden the networks for administrators [of color], and many of them (especially in the south of the state) do not have connections with each other.

It's all about where you get your support. Do you get it from your board? Do you get it from your community, your family, your association? **You have to have support if you're out there doing anything.**

If I'm going to be a social justice leader and call out inequities, then I need to be damn sure that you as my superintendent are going to be supportive of me... **When people gripe and complain, will my job be secure?**

[Leaders have to figure out] which practices really reflect the commitment to equity at the school level: the procedures, the rules, the regulations... grading practices, or disciplinary data. **Where do we see reflections of equitable practices?**

If ISBE had scholarships, that would help [improve retention of leaders of color]. That helped in the 80s to bring women into leadership.

There is a need to incentivize by offering scholarships. [One way is] partnerships between the district and a university... to [build the pipeline].

Start with implicit bias [and] cultural responsiveness training, and leaders have to [join]. We had a training and I was [there] as a superintendent right next to our office staff... **We need to listen to each other.**

Even though the recruitment of candidates of color may be there, **they're still walking into environments where the cultures haven't changed.** It's institutionalized racism. There needs to be [district] diversity training, and also some funds for scholarships.

In interviews, Advisory Group members highlighted strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for IL leadership

STRENGTHS

- **Advisory Group members are positioned to be strong partners to the Dept**, and many are already focused on increasing district/school leader diversity
- **The School Leadership Paradigm is seen as a strong framework** that can frame the vision of the Dept, and it has an existing focus on equity and cultural competency
- **Individual school systems are building their own partnerships and pipelines**, and can be used as exemplars and supported by the Dept

WEAKNESSES

- **Principal preparation can be too narrowly focused on technical skills**, instead of building needed leadership capacity & an equity lens
- **Strong mentoring & coaching, while critical, aren't reliably available**, due to funding, mixed quality & access, especially for principals of color
- **Expectations for principals can be overwhelming and the pay limited**, which can deter applicants
- **Educator leader roles (e.g. assistant principal) aren't always effective pathways**, especially for leaders of color

OPPORTUNITIES

- **The Dept could assess the capacity and interest for ROEs** to disseminate best practices and professional development
- **The Dept could support prep program-district partnerships** through policy & funding
- **Prep programs need support for embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, & anti-racism**
- **Districts need support and education to implement equitable hiring practices** and address pipeline challenges
- **Virtual conferences and technology post-COVID** could bolster support for the pipeline

THREATS

- **The shortage of principals of color is significant** and varies by area and specific demographics
- **An effective strategy must focus both on recruitment and retention for principals of color**, seeking ideas from effective principals and superintendents of color
- **Limited actionable data is available** for the state, programs and districts to use to strengthen and diversify the principal pipeline

The DDSL identified several key implications from the Advisory Group interviews that helped to inform the Work Plan

Implication	Description
1 Assess ROE capacity to serve as critical hubs	The Dept can consider whether/how to leverage the existing ROE structure for dissemination of best practice & professional development. As ROEs vary statewide, however, the Dept must assess capacity and interest in leading this critical work.
2 Build a public relations campaign	The Dept can build a public relations campaign for the school leader role, especially to encourage people of color to apply. However, the Dept must consider and address other barriers for candidates of color , e.g. systemic bias, lack of mentorship.
3 Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism through all work	The Dept can focus on disseminating best practices and exemplars that focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism as integrated components of any effective initiative, rather than another “box to be checked.”
4 Leverage & connect existing organizations and tools	The Dept can leverage existing tools/resources (e.g. the School Leadership Framework or “Paradigm”) and act as a convener for organizations already doing effective work (e.g. Illinois Principals Association) to spread effective practices around the state.
5 Collect, analyze and share actionable data	The Dept can develop data sharing agreements and/or central data infrastructure to ensure that decisions are evidence-based and progress is measurable, especially for pipeline challenges which vary widely by region.

Key themes emerged from the literature review, focus groups and Advisory Group, which informed the DDSL Work Plan

OVERALL DDSL STRATEGY

- **Diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism** must be **integrated** throughout all work to be effective
- **An effective strategy must focus on recruitment, mentoring and retention** for leaders who support and reflect student diversity
- **Actionable data to improve the leadership pipeline is limited**, and must be collected, analyzed and shared

RECRUITMENT

- **The shortage of leaders of color is significant**, but varies by geography and specific demographics
- **Existing pathways don't effectively recruit or incentivize promising candidates of color** to enter leadership
- **Leadership roles are not currently seen as attractive or attainable**, particularly by candidates of color

PREPARATION

- **Prep programs face increasing requirements**, and are struggling to meet them all effectively
- **Prep programs desire more collaboration and capacity building**, especially around diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism

HIRING & EARLY SUPPORTS

- **Strong induction is critical but not consistent**, and requires rigorous mentor recruitment, selection & training
- **Districts need support and anti-bias education** to implement equitable hiring practices
- **New leaders desire and need mentors across IL geographies**, e.g., across rural and urban areas

LONG-TERM RETENTION

- **Expectations for principals can be overwhelming and the pay limited**, which can limit retention
- **Leaders need venues to network with their peers for support**, especially leaders of color, e.g., through IPA
- **The ROEs could be a venue for leader capacity building**, though some ROEs have more capacity than others

4 The Work Plan

- WHAT ARE THE DDSL'S GOALS?
- WHAT STRATEGIES WILL IT USE TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS?
- HOW WILL IT MEASURE SUCCESS?

This and the following section present the DDSL's mission, vision and work plan, and detail its three goal areas



The DDSL seeks to partner with and support stakeholders to foster a diverse and robust leadership pipeline in Illinois

VISION



*The Department of District and School Leadership will partner with stakeholders **to foster a robust leadership pipeline** that **reflects the diversity** of our students.*

MISSION



*DDSL will support stakeholders as they **recruit, coach** and **retain** high-quality, equity-minded education leaders* who support and reflect the diversity of our students.*

*Equity-minded leaders are district and school leaders who apply an equity lens to their leadership practices and who approach their work with equity as a central concern. Equity-minded leaders are concerned with meeting the needs historically underrepresented student groups. For example, equity-minded leaders consider how “equity can make schools more inclusive and instruction more culturally responsive.” To learn more about equity-minded leaders, see [“How Principals Affect Students and Schools”](#) by the Wallace Foundation.

The DDSL's mission and vision inform its theory of action, which is the foundation of the Department's Work Plan

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%.

The DDSL's Work Plan include six components: goals, measures of success, strategies, leader voices, implications for equity and diversity, and implementation approaches

WORK PLAN COMPONENTS

Goals

What the DDSL hopes to achieve to pursue its vision and mission

Strategies

The broad actions the DDSL will take to achieve its goals

Measures of Success

Data that the DDSL will track to assess progress made on achieving its goals

Leader Voices

Quotations from leaders on the ground that informed the DDSL Work Plan and that support the goals and strategies

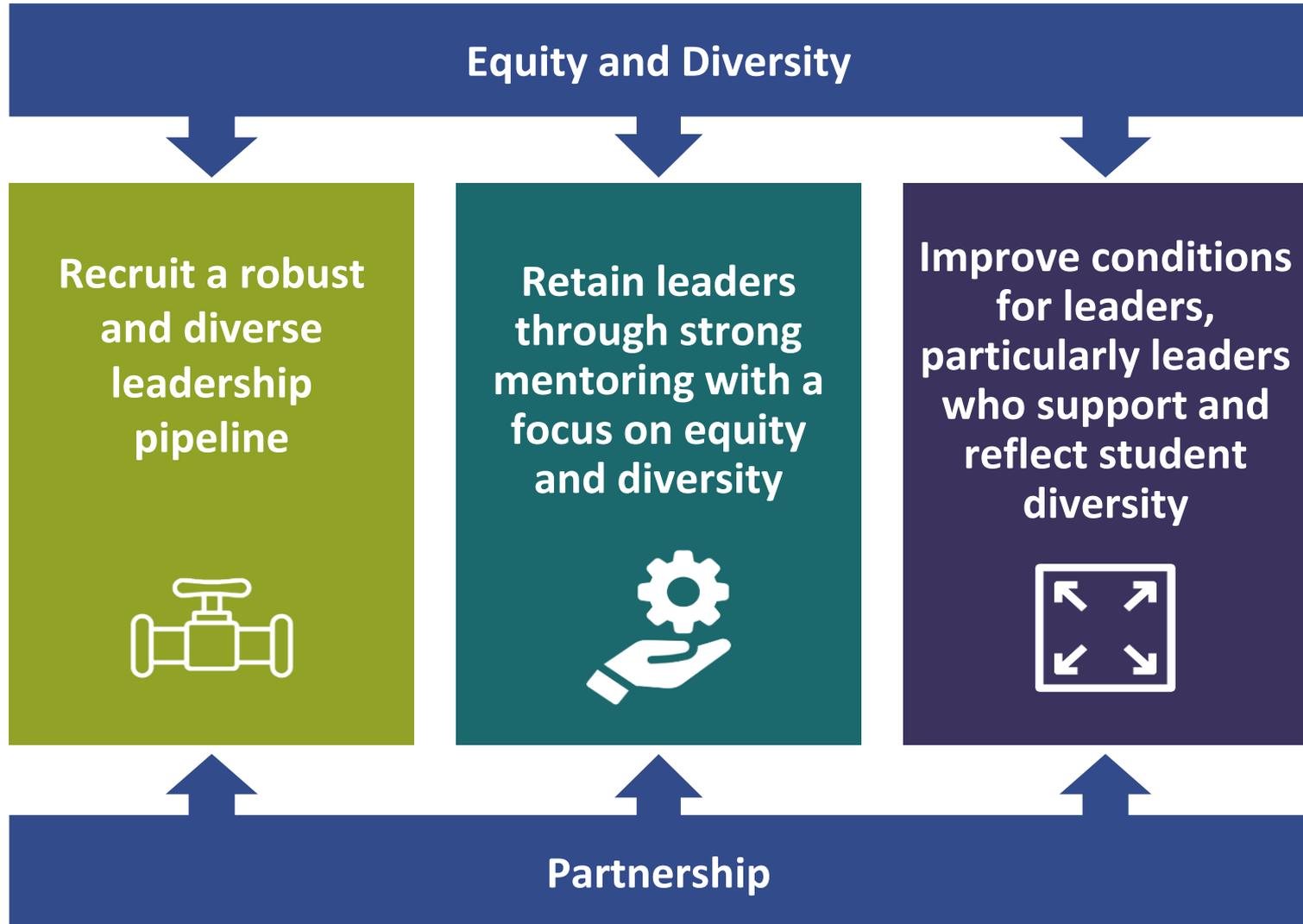
Implications for Equity and Diversity

Challenges in the current IL context that might impact equity and diversity, and potential solutions

Implementation Approaches

The ways in which the DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to implement the strategies

To actualize its theory of action, the DDSL will pursue three goal areas, with a focus on equity, diversity and partnership





1 Recruit a robust and diverse leadership pipeline

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit more leaders who support and reflect student diversity into the district and school leadership pipeline

Strategies

Serve as a bully pulpit to elevate leadership roles as attractive and attainable, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity and in high need areas

1

Explore opportunities to incentivize leaders who support and reflect student diversity to enter the pipeline

2

Support the creation or improvement of early pathways, such as grow your own models for teachers, particularly in high need areas

3

Support and help place equity-minded leader candidates, particularly leaders who support and reflect student diversity, into leadership roles

4



1 Recruit a robust and diverse leadership pipeline

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit more leaders who support and reflect student diversity into the district and school leadership pipeline

Measures of Success

Number of candidates statewide who support and reflect student diversity	Number of candidates statewide who support and reflect student diversity entering new principal positions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">5% increase by the end of 2021-2022 school year10% increase by the end of 2022-2023 school year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase in the number of candidates who support and reflect student diversity entering new principal positions

Leader Voices

“My principal came to me and asked whether I had thought about becoming a building principal. It hadn’t even dawned on me [until then].”

“No one tells you you can do this job as a kid [of color]. You don’t dream that big because you don’t know any better.”

“The reason why there’s such a dearth of people of color pursuing education is because many of them have had traumatic experiences at school. Why would they go back into a traumatic environment?”



1 Recruit a robust and diverse leadership pipeline

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit more leaders who support and reflect student diversity into the district and school leadership pipeline

Implications for Equity and Diversity

Challenges in the Current Context

Potential Solutions

1

Leader candidates who reflect student diversity report experiencing **racism and bias in the program application process** and sometimes become **disincentivized** from applying to prep programs.

Disseminate best practices and resources to encourage prep programs **to dismantle institutional racism and bias** to create equitable conditions for aspiring leaders who reflect student diversity.

2

Leader graduates who reflect student diversity report experiencing **racism and bias during the hiring process** and sometimes become **disincentivized** from seeking a principal or superintendent role.

Disseminate best practices and resources to encourage school systems and others **to dismantle institutional racism and bias** to create equitable conditions for leaders who reflect student diversity.

3

Continuously-evolving leadership expectations sometimes dissuade prospective leaders from entering the pipeline.

Clarify the role and expectations of district and school leaders and encourage prep programs, school systems and others to **implement best practices** related to improving conditions for leaders, especially leaders who support and reflect student diversity.

2 Retain leaders through strong mentoring



Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to retain leaders through strong mentoring, especially for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Strategies

S

1 Recruit highly effective new principal mentors, especially mentors who support and reflect student diversity, in under-resourced schools and high need areas

2 Support the implementation of rigorous mentor selection to identify highly effective mentors who support and reflect the rich diversity of students

3 Support the implementation of high-quality training that prepares mentors and principals with a culturally responsive lens

4 Utilize technologies to connect new principals with mentors across diverse geographies (e.g., connecting urban and rural principals) and to create peer learning opportunities for mentors and mentees

2 Retain leaders through strong mentoring



Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to retain leaders through strong mentoring, especially for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Measures of Success

Improved principal outcomes and school climate	Post-COVID new principal support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increase in principal satisfaction and retention▪ Increase in access to professional learning for new principals▪ Improved school culture and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Support for new principals who face challenges related to returning to full in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year

Leader Voices

“We have a partnership with NIU and Rockford...[Rockford] chose aspiring leaders and they’re getting their degree from Northern, and we’re assigned to mentor them through the process.”

“I had a mentor that thought I would be good at it and encouraged me...someone that believed in me told me I could do it and encouraged me and then supported me.”

“[Mentoring] needs to be connected to equity for it to be effective.”

“Mentoring is critical and can help prevent churn within the pipeline, especially due to COVID. We really need state dollars for this, but it needs to be sustained either way in order to have an impact.”

2 Retain leaders through strong mentoring



Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to retain leaders through strong mentoring, especially for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Implications for Equity and Diversity

Challenges in the Current Context

Potential Solutions

1

Leaders of color and bilingual leaders are **underrepresented** among current Illinois principals, which might make it **challenging to recruit** enough principal mentors who reflect student diversity.

Explore and implement **mentor recruitment strategies targeted** at leaders who support and reflect student diversity.

2

Leaders who reflect student diversity have expressed experiencing **isolation** and **difficulties accessing high-quality mentors**.

Support professional networks and their **accessibility** to leaders who reflect student diversity; **train mentors with a culturally responsive lens** and prepare them to support leaders who support and reflect student diversity.

3

Leaders who reflect student diversity have expressed experiencing **bias** in various processes, such as the **mentor recruitment** and **selection processes**.

Encourage and support school systems and approved providers to **address biases in mentor recruitment** and **selection processes**, and to **apply an equity lens**.



3 | Improve conditions for leaders

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to improve conditions for leaders to increase retention, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Strategies

S

1 Elevate a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism across the pipeline, such as in hiring and placement practices

2 Explore opportunities to address pressures of the superintendent and principal roles, such as with distributive leadership structures

3 Support the implementation of rigorous mentor training for superintendents, with an eye to effectively supporting principals, especially principals who support and reflect student diversity

4 Collect, analyze and share actionable data related to the leadership pipeline



3 | Improve conditions for leaders

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to improve conditions for leaders to increase retention, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Measures of Success

Improved principal outcomes	Improved superintendent mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase in principal satisfaction and retention, disaggregated by identity markers (e.g., race, ethnicity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhanced support for new superintendents through New Superintendent Mentoring program

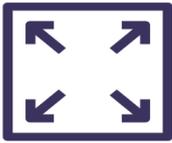
Leader Voices

"I've had cancer three times, I've been divorced, and there's no year in my life that was harder than my first year as a principal."

[Leaders must figure out] which practices really reflect the commitment to equity at the school level: the procedures, the rules, the regulations...grading practices or disciplinary data. Where do we see reflections of equitable practices?

"The job is only lonely at the top if you allow it to be."

"If I'm going to be a social justice leader and call out inequities, then I need to be [sure] that you as my superintendent are going to be supportive of me... When people gripe and complain, will my job be secure?"



3 | Improve conditions for leaders

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to improve conditions for leaders to increase retention, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Implications for Equity and Diversity

Challenges in the Current Context

1

Districts and schools across the state have **different diversity, equity and inclusion needs** and conditions. There are no one-size-fits-all practices for all districts and schools related to applying a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism.

2

Limited actionable data is available for the state, programs and districts to use to strengthen and diversify the district and school leadership pipeline.

3

Some leaders who support and reflect student diversity report a **desire for more superintendent support**, particularly from superintendents who do not share their identities.

Potential Solutions

Identify and disseminate **differentiated** best practices and models across geographies; partner with and support stakeholders to **create courageous spaces** for school systems across and within geographies to learn from one another; **support organizations who provide equity training** to school districts.

Determine the types of data needed and **implement mechanisms to collect, analyze and share data** through existing programs and with partners.

Identify opportunities to **enhance existing superintendent mentoring**, as well as with partners across the state; **encourage the application of a culturally responsive lens** to ensure superintendents are well-prepared to support all principals.

Investing in these three goal areas will help the state progress on two critical outcomes

Long-Term Outcomes

More candidates who support and reflect student diversity will enter the pipeline

More leaders who support and reflect student diversity will be retained

Measures

Number of candidates in the pipeline who support and reflect student diversity

Retention rates of leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Targets

By the end of SY21-22:
Increase by 5%

By the end of SY22-23:
Increase by 10%

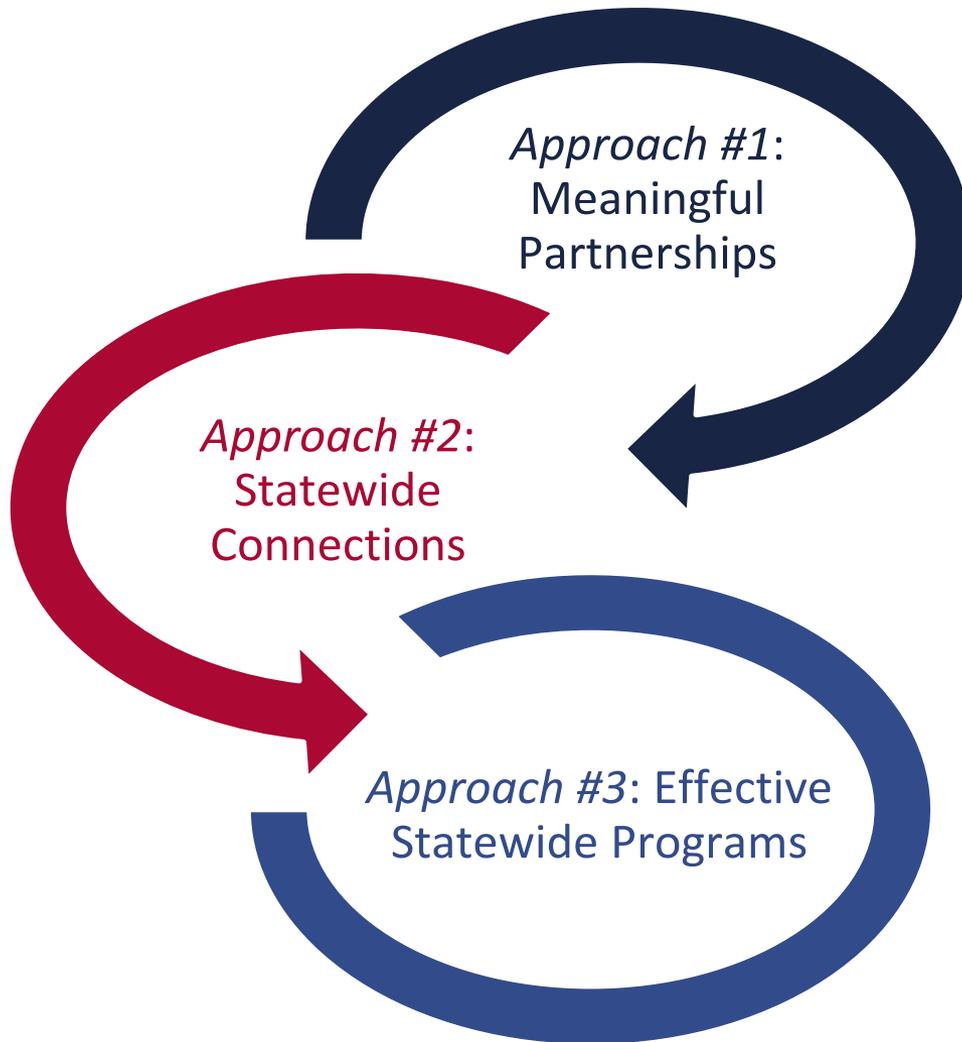
By the end of SY22-23:
Increase by 5%

By the end of SY23-24:
Increase by 10%

5 Implementation

- HOW WILL THE DDSL IMPLEMENT ITS WORK PLAN?

The DDSL will utilize three approaches that are closely intertwined to implement its Work Plan



This section describes how the Department of District and School Leadership will utilize these three approaches to pursue its goals and implement its strategies.



1 Recruit a robust and diverse leadership pipeline

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to recruit more leaders who support and reflect student diversity into the district and school leadership pipeline

Approaches the Department can take

Meaningful Partnerships

- Partner with ROEs, professional networks, organizations who support minority education leaders and others to implement recruitment strategies that allow for differentiation based on local context
- Engage active and retired leaders, as well as teacher leaders, to learn more about the challenges they face, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Statewide Connections

- Recruit aspiring principals and superintendents across diverse geographies (e.g., rural and urban areas)
- Use technology to connect aspiring principals and superintendents to programs, networks and information across the state

Effective Statewide Programs

- Develop and implement a statewide recruitment program that identifies approved providers to recruit, enroll, support and place leader candidates
- Give preference to providers who demonstrate an ability to recruit aspiring leaders who support and reflect student diversity, and/or leaders to serve in under-resourced schools and high-need areas

The DDSL is also seeking to develop a statewide recruitment program to recruit aspiring principals

Overview

The DDSL is requesting that the Board authorize the State Superintendent to approve the release and award of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) / Request for Proposals (RFPs) for **Principal Recruitment Program grants** during fiscal year 2022.

Purpose

The FY2022 Principal Recruitment Program aims to ensure that Illinois schools are led by a **strong and diverse pipeline** of educators ready to assume the responsibilities of principalship.

The State Superintendent will identify **one or more entities to implement and administer** the program.

Approved entities will receive grant funding to recruit candidates who support and reflect student diversity, support candidates as they progress through and complete their programs and assist candidates as they seek a principalship.

Budget

Grants will be made to one or more eligible entities for the funds for a **three-year award period** not to exceed **\$1.8 million per year**, for a total of \$5.4 million.

Organizations representing IL principals, institutions of higher education, community colleges, Regional Offices of Education, school districts or other educational entities are eligible to apply.

Priority will go to applicants who demonstrate a commitment and ability to recruit aspiring principals who desire to serve in **under-resourced and hard-to-staff schools** and who **support and reflect student diversity**.

The DDSL is currently preparing to begin the NOFO/RFP process

Process

- The FY 2022 NOFO/RFP awards will be for **one year with two one-year continuation renewals** contingent upon a sufficient appropriation and satisfactory performance in each preceding grant year.

Financial Background

- **FY2022 will be ISBE's first year operating a Principal Recruitment Program.**
- The funding request is for \$1.8 million, and the program will be funded with General Operational Funds.
- The NOFO/RFP process will be competitive, and awards will be for one year starting July 1, 2021.
- It is expected that an investment of \$1.8 million **could fund between eight and twelve grants**, each of which could support at least 20 aspiring principals, for a **total impact of at least 160 new principals** to serve our students and communities.

Implications for Policy, Budget and Communications

- **Policy:** ISBE will review interim and summative program performance data in accordance with all GATA protocol. ISBE will determine the effectiveness of this program through a third-party summative program evaluation.
- **Budget:** Funding is subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.
- **Communications:** Notice for the NOFO/RFP will be made via www.isbe.net. The awards will be listed on the state's Grant Accountability and Transparency Act website.

Next Steps

- The State Superintendent will recommend to the ISBE Board that they authorize the State Superintendent to release the NOFO/RFP and award funds to successful applicants at the June/July 2021 Board Meeting.

2 Retain leaders through strong mentoring



Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to retain leaders through strong mentoring, especially for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Approaches the Department can take

Meaningful Partnerships

- Support school systems to develop and implement the retention and mentoring strategies, including supporting with mentor recruitment, selection, training, matching and connecting principals across diverse geographies
- Partner with ROEs, professional networks and others to implement retention and mentoring strategies

Statewide Connections

- Recruit principal mentors across diverse geographies (e.g., rural and urban areas)
- Use technology to connect aspiring principals with principal mentors across the state
- Use technology to connect mentors and mentees with their peers across the state for networking and learning opportunities

Effective Statewide Programs

- Develop and implement a statewide mentoring program that identifies approved providers to recruit, select, train and match principal mentors with a culturally responsive lens and focus on equity and diversity
- Give preference to providers who demonstrate an ability to recruit principal mentors who support and reflect student diversity, and/or who serve in under-resourced schools and high-need areas

The DDSL is also seeking to develop a statewide mentoring program to retain principals

Overview

The DDSL is requesting that the Board authorize the State Superintendent to approve the release and award of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) / Request for Proposals (RFPs) for **New Principal Mentoring Program grants** during fiscal year 2022.

Purpose

The FY 2022 New Principal Mentoring Program will **match new principals** in their first year of employment in IL with **veteran principals** who have demonstrated success as instructional leaders.

The State Superintendent will identify **one or more entities to implement and administer** the program.

Approved entities will receive grant funding to identify and recruit highly effective new principal mentors, provide mentors with annual training and support to fulfill mentoring duties, match mentors and mentees, pay mentor stipends and collect data on the program.

Budget

Grants will be made to one or more eligible entities for the funds for a **three-year award period** not to exceed **\$1.2 million per year**, for a total of \$3.6 million.

Organizations representing IL principals, institutions of higher education, community colleges, Regional Offices of Education, school districts or other educational entities are eligible to apply.

The DDSL is currently preparing to begin the NOFO/RFP process

Process

- The FY 2022 NOFO/RFP awards will be for **one year with two one-year continuation renewals** contingent upon a sufficient appropriation and satisfactory performance in each preceding grant year.

Program Outcomes

The success of the FY2022 New Principal Mentoring Program will be determined based on the following **program outcomes**, which will be assessed by a third-party evaluator:

- Increased access to professional learning for new principals
- Increased job satisfaction of new principals
- Increased retention of new principals
- Improved school culture and climate

Grant Deliverables

Approved providers are responsible for the following **grant deliverables**:

- Recruiting and selecting mentors
- Providing initial and continuation mentor training
- Matching each mentee with a mentor
- Ensuring that mentors and mentees meet regularly and engage in focused activities supporting the mentee needs that are self-identified or observed through the mentoring relationship
- Manage payments to mentors in a timely manner
- Providing ISBE with quarterly reporting that includes mentor training topics and activities, number of matched mentors and mentees, mentor/mentee contact hours, program costs, and other grant deliverables
- Administering a new principal satisfaction survey
- Engaging fully in an end-of-year program evaluation facilitated by a third-party entity

The program would support 350-400 new principals in FY2022

Financial Background

- **FY2022 will be ISBE's first year operating a New Principal Mentoring Program.**
- The funding request is for \$1.2 million, and the program will be funded with ISBE's federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund II SEA set-aside funding in FY 2022.
- The NOFO/RFP process will be competitive, and awards will be for one year starting July 1, 2021.
- There were 398 first-year principals in FY2020 and 354 in FY2021. It is expected that an investment \$1.2 million will **provide support for at least this number of new principals** in FY2022, including the costs for mentor stipends, training and program coordination.
- Approved providers will serve as fiscal agents and pay mentors directly, and will also receive funding for delivering training, coordinating mentor assignments, and providing program structure and support.

Implications for Policy, Budget and Communications

- **Policy:** ISBE will review interim and summative program performance data in accordance with all GATA protocol. ISBE will determine the effectiveness of this program through a third-party summative program evaluation.
- **Legislative:** Senate Amendment to SB814 would make multiple changes to the New Principal Mentoring Program in statute, including prioritizing mentoring for new principals in high-need schools and making the program voluntary.
- **Communications:** The DDSL and approved providers will communicate with district leadership to announce the program opportunity and identify all first-year principals who are required to participate in the program. Notice for the NOFO/RFP will be made via www.isbe.net. The awards will be listed on the state's GATA website.

Next Steps

- The State Superintendent will recommend to the ISBE Board that they authorize the State Superintendent to release the NOFO/RFP and award funds to successful applicants at the June/July 2021 Board Meeting.



Building statewide capacity

Goal

The DDSL will partner with and support stakeholders to improve conditions for leaders to improve retention, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Approaches the Department can take

Meaningful Partnerships

- Partner with and support professional organizations, preparation programs, school systems and others to develop opportunities for district and school leaders to engage in peer learning, particularly as it relates to the pressures of their roles
- Partner with and support professional organizations to connect district and school leaders with their peers across the state, particularly for leaders who support and reflect student diversity

Statewide Connections

- Consider developing an opt-in list of district and school leaders that includes demographic and contact information, and disseminate to leaders
- Identify opportunities to elevate and share the critical role that diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism play across the pipeline and in various geographic contexts (e.g., rural vs. urban context)

Effective Statewide Programs

- Require approved providers in statewide programs to collect and share data
- Analyze data from statewide programs to assess impact, make improvements and inform policymaking at the state level
- Explore opportunities to improve the rigor and effective implementation of the mentoring programs for new superintendents



7 Professional Growth at ISBE

As part of its charge, the DDSL will also focus inward to provide professional learning and coaching to ISBE leaders and staff

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



The DDSL will **organize and implement a professional learning series** for ISBE leaders and staff, including department executive directors and others. The professional learning series will focus on multiple topics, including **implicit bias, performance feedback, written communication** and **motivating teams**.



DIFFERENTIATED COACHING



The DDSL will also provide **individual professional coaching for ISBE leaders and staff** based on self-determined needs, identified growth areas and professional goals.

8 Moving Forward

- WHAT WILL THE DDSL DO NEXT?

The DDSL is embarking on implementing its Work Plan to help advance its vision and mission

This deck describes the DDSL's key activities to date:



The DDSL will now implement its Work Plan by exploring three primary approaches:



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

Martin McGreal

Director

mmcgreal@isbe.net





9 Appendices



Appendix A

Advisory Group Interviews

Advisory Group Interviews

Synthesis of Findings & Implications



Appendix A summarizes findings from Advisory Group interviews which helped inform the Department's Work Plan

Appendix A Summary

The Advisory Group comprises key Illinois leaders focused on district & school leadership

- The Advisory Group has 14 members, who represent a diverse set of organizations, including prep programs, school districts and statewide professional associations
- The DDSL – in partnership with Education First – interviewed Advisory Group members to hear their perspectives on the needs and challenges in the IL landscape around district and school leadership

In interviews, Advisory Group members shared about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats

- **Strengths:** the Advisory Group capacity to serve as strong partners to the Dept, potential use of the School Leadership Paradigm as a framework, and existing partnerships and pipelines the Dept can learn from
- **Weaknesses:** limited focus on effective leadership skills in prep, inconsistent quality & funding for mentoring, burnout & public relations concerns in the principal role, and limits of the assistant principal-principal pathway
- **Opportunities:** leveraging Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), facilitating prep program-district partnerships, embedding equity in prep, supporting districts with equitable hiring, and utilizing hybrid models post-COVID
- **Threats:** the shortage of principals of color (with regional variations), focusing on both recruitment and retention for principals of color, and limited data on the district/school leader pipeline

Education First surfaced five critical implications from the Advisory Group interviews for the Work Plan

- Assess the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) capacity to serve as critical hubs
- Build a public relations campaign
- Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism in all leadership-related work
- Leverage and connect existing organizations and tools, e.g., the Illinois Principals Association, School Leadership Framework (“Paradigm”)
- Collect, analyze and share actionable data on the district/school leader pipeline

The 14-member Advisory Group includes leaders in district & school leadership who reflect the rich racial and geographic diversity of our state

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

- **Allen Bearden**, President & Teacher, Jackie Vaughn Graduate School for Teacher Leadership, Chicago State University
- **Brent Clark***, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Administrators
- **Carole Collins Ayanlaja**, Assistant Professor, Dept of Educational Leadership, Eastern Illinois University
- **Daniel Booth**, Superintendent, Carbondale Elementary School District No. 95
- **David Ardrey***, Executive Director, Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools
- **Devon Horton**, Superintendent, Evanston/Skokie 16
- **Ed Howerton**, President-Elect, Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration
- **Elizabeth Minor**, Associate Professor & Education Program Chair, NLU Principal Preparation
- **Erika Hunt**, Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher, Center for the Study of Educational Policy
- **Jason Leahy**, Executive Director, Illinois Principals Association
- **Maria Burgos***, Board Secretary, Illinois Association of Latino Administrators
- **Mark Klaisner**, Executive Director, Illinois Regional Office of Education, West 40
- **Minerva Garcia-Sanchez**, Incoming Superintendent, Chicago Public Schools Area Chief
- **Tom Bertrand**, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Boards

*Denotes advisory group members who were not available for interviews.

The Advisory Group shared valuable insights that helped shape the Dept's engagement with them and informed the Work Plan

STRENGTHS

- **Advisory Group members are positioned to be strong partners to the Dept**, and many are already focused on increasing district/school leader diversity
- **The School Leadership Paradigm is seen as a strong framework** that can frame the vision of the Dept, and it has an existing focus on equity and cultural competency
- **Individual school systems are building their own partnerships and pipelines**, and can be used as exemplars and supported by the Dept

WEAKNESSES

- **Principal preparation can be too narrowly focused on technical skills**, instead of building needed leadership capacity & an equity lens
- **Strong mentoring & coaching, while critical, aren't reliably available**, due to funding, mixed quality & access, especially for principals of color
- **Expectations for principals can be overwhelming and the pay limited**, which can deter applicants
- **Educator leader roles (e.g., assistant principal) aren't always effective pathways**, especially for leaders of color

OPPORTUNITIES

- **The Dept could assess the capacity and interest for ROEs** to disseminate best practices and professional development
- **The Dept could support prep program-district partnerships** through policy & funding
- **Prep programs need support for embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, & anti-racism**
- **Districts need support and education to implement equitable hiring practices** and address pipeline challenges
- **Virtual conferences and technology post-COVID** could bolster support for the pipeline

THREATS

- **The shortage of principals of color is significant** and varies by area and specific demographics
- **An effective strategy must focus both on recruitment and retention for principals of color**, seeking ideas from effective principals and superintendents of color
- **Limited actionable data is available** for the state, programs and districts to use to strengthen and diversify the principal pipeline

Illinois has a strong set of partners focused on school leader diversity, an existing framework for excellence & several thriving partnership and pipeline efforts



- **Advisory Group members are positioned to be strong partners to the Dept**, and many are already focused on increasing district/school leader diversity
- **The School Leadership Paradigm is seen as a strong framework** that can frame the vision of the Dept, and it has an existing focus on equity and cultural competency
- **Individual school systems are building their own partnerships and pipelines**, and can be used as exemplars and supported by the Dept

Interviewee Reflections

“It is important for prep programs to have a common vision, but for the [Dept] to come at it with a learning orientation - **there is an organization that already convenes prep programs quarterly that could be a good venue.**”

“Instead of disparate standards, **we should focus on one set of standards and have those dovetail into the School Leader Paradigm that the IPA developed...**[it] crosswalks with PSEL standards so they overlap well between prep programs’ focus on components of leadership [as well as a focus on] individual, school, and community.”

“**Some schools are doing a really nice job of building their own [principal] pipeline initiatives** from awareness to a vocational pathway (sometimes under CTE, which is unusual), and it is very important to support those programs.”

“We’ll have to get creative about **a broader, deeper, and more diverse pool for school leaders.** How can we develop the next generation of diverse educators that we can then draw from to lead our schools?”

Gaps in principal prep and mentoring, as well as difficulties inherent in the principal role, can create pipeline challenges



- **Principal preparation can be too narrowly focused on technical skills**, instead of building needed leadership capacity & an equity lens
- **Strong mentoring & coaching, while critical, aren't reliably available**, due to funding, mixed quality & access, especially for principals of color
- **Expectations for principals can be overwhelming and the pay limited**, which can deter applicants
- **Educator leader roles (e.g., assistant principal) aren't always effective pathways**, especially for leaders of color

Interviewee Reflections

“Principals have to be ethical, transparent, honest, and forthright even when that will upset people, and those internal characteristics are either there or not, so we try to draw them out as prep programs. If you can't do that, you cannot and should not be a principal.”

“Mentoring is critical and can help prevent churn within the pipeline, especially due to COVID. We really need state dollars for this, but it needs to be sustained in order to have an impact.”

“The principal profession has a huge PR issue...[they] are dealing with more requirements [e.g.the School Code, which has doubled] and then we won't provide [higher salaries] which is a hard pill to swallow.”

“We need more effective mentoring...especially in a landscape of mostly white men...and done through a culturally responsive lens.”

“Our assistant principal leaders of color don't see themselves as having the opportunity to take on the principal role.”

The Dept can leverage, connect and support existing efforts to improve the leader pipeline, especially with partnerships and equitable practices



- The Dept could assess the capacity and interest for Regional Offices of Education to disseminate best practices and professional development
- The Dept could support prep program-district partnerships through policy & funding
- Prep programs need support for embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, & anti-racism
- Districts need support and education to implement equitable hiring practices and address pipeline challenges
- Virtual conferences and technology post-COVID could bolster support for the pipeline

Interviewee Reflections

“The state should act as a connector with resources, create policy... and create a feedback loop if the policy isn’t working. It should also **provide training, support, and opportunities for collaboration**, so principals can collaborate on common issues.”

“This office could elevate/facilitate difficult **conversations** about the dispositional qualities and best practices of leadership through identifying places where it’s working well and using those as models.”

“We need to figure out how to do diversity, equity, inclusion well without mandating it as just another box to be checked but drive it into our culture.”

“[We must] effectively educate Boards about the qualities necessary for good leaders... This will require racial, cultural, linguistic, social, class, and gender sensitivity among leaders.”

“We could rebuild the school leader profession differently post-COVID by using district case studies and having the ROEs spread these great ideas around the state.”

More actionable data is needed to address leader pipeline challenges, particularly recruitment and retention



- **The shortage of principals of color is significant and varies** by area and specific demographics
- **An effective strategy must focus both on recruitment and retention for principals of color**, seeking ideas from effective principals and superintendents of color
- **Limited actionable data is available** for the state, programs and districts to use to strengthen and diversify the principal pipeline

Interviewee Reflections

“**Lack of diversity is a problem**, especially for Black principals outside of CPS (there is a big disparity between Black students and Black principals) and there is a **huge Latine differential** both in and out of CPS.”

“One challenge is to **make sure that the pipeline is diverse** so that the best leaders are in the positions for the schools they need to serve... **Our CPS and suburban programs are very different.**”

“**This group needs to spend time on both recruitment and retention.** People can hire brilliant candidates of color, but if the organizational culture doesn’t help them flourish, they leave.”

“**Who do we have ready to become principals? What are their demographics?** What are ROEs doing across the state? Which programs have been successfully placing folks? Where are principals successful and where are they struggling?”

The Department identified several key implications from the Advisory Group interviews that helped inform the Dept Work Plan

Implication	Description
1 Assess ROE capacity to serve as critical hubs	The Dept can consider whether/how to leverage the existing ROE structure for dissemination of best practice & professional development. As ROEs vary statewide, however, the Dept must assess capacity and interest in leading this critical work.
2 Build a public relations campaign	The Dept can build a public relations campaign for the school leader role, especially to encourage people of color to apply. However, the Dept must consider and address other barriers for candidates of color , e.g., systemic bias, lack of mentorship.
3 Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism through all work	The Dept can focus on disseminating best practices and exemplars that focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism as integrated components of any effective initiative, rather than another “box to be checked.”
4 Leverage & connect existing organizations and tools	The Dept can leverage existing tools/resources (e.g., the School Leadership Framework or “Paradigm”) and act as a convener for organizations already doing effective work (e.g., Illinois Principals Association) to spread effective practices around the state.
5 Collect, analyze and share actionable data	The Dept can develop data sharing agreements and/or central data infrastructure to ensure that decisions are evidence-based and progress is measurable, especially for pipeline challenges which vary widely by region.



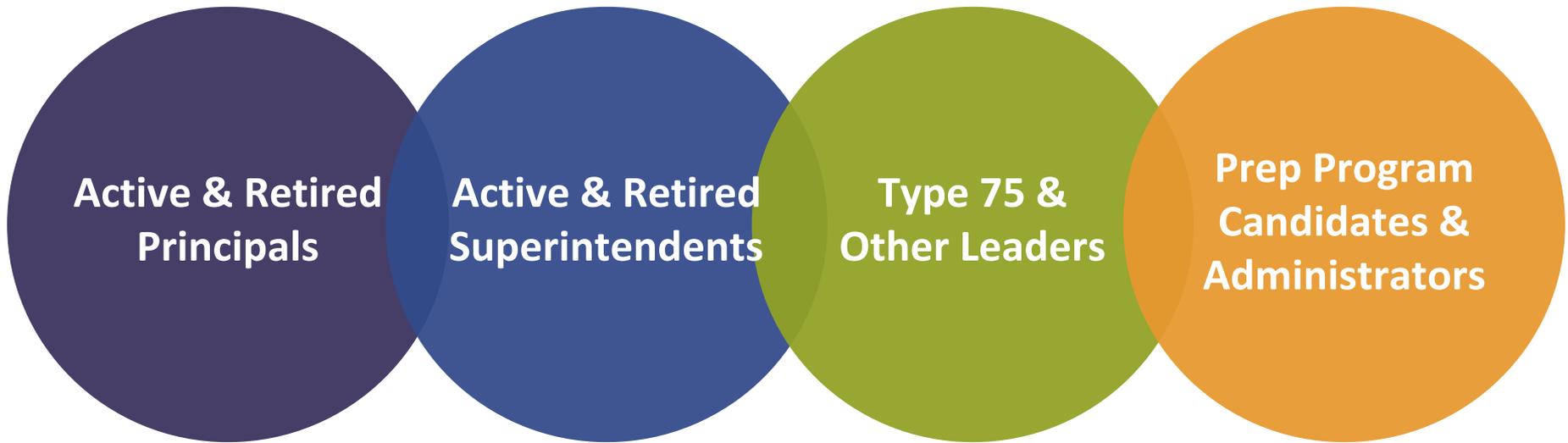
Appendix B

Focus Groups Analysis

IL Department of District/School Leadership: Focus Group Analysis



The DDSL conducted four focus groups to learn more about school and district leadership from aspiring, active and retired leaders directly



Focus group participants reflected the rich racial and geographic diversity of our state and continue to be valued partners to the DDSL.

In all four focus groups, we asked participants about their views on similar components of district & school leadership

Category

Selected Questions

1 Background

What is the **most important part** of a leader's job to get right?

2 Preparation

What is one thing prep programs should **continue/start doing to improve how they train aspiring leaders**? What **experiences or prep** must leaders have to be successful?

3 Challenges & Supports

What are the **unique opportunities and challenges** that current/aspiring leaders of color face? How does **equity manifest in your practice**? What are the **biggest gaps** that current leaders have, and what **supports are most important** to address them?

4 Recruitment

What are the **best ways to recruit** leaders, especially leaders of color, into the role? What is your advice for how ISBE can help to **diversify the leader pipeline**? What **barriers** have discouraged you from seeking to become a leader?

5 Retention

What were the **most helpful supports** that contributed to your success and retention in a leader role? What are the **most effective strategies** to retain leaders, especially leaders of color, in their roles for 5+ years?

Advisory Group members and focus group participants highlighted many of the same themes about leadership

OVERALL DDSL STRATEGY

- **Diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism** must be **integrated** throughout all work to be effective
- An effective strategy must focus both on **recruitment, mentoring and retention** for leaders of color
- **Actionable data to improve the leadership pipeline is limited**, and must be collected, analyzed and shared

RECRUITMENT

- **The shortage of leaders of color is significant**, but varies by geography and specific demographics
- Existing pathways don't effectively recruit or incentivize **promising candidates of color** to enter leadership
- Leadership roles are not currently seen as **attractive or attainable**, particularly by candidates of color

PREPARATION

- **Prep programs face increasing requirements**, and are struggling to meet them all effectively
- **Prep programs desire more collaboration and capacity building**, especially around DEIA

HIRING & EARLY SUPPORTS

- **Strong induction is critical but not consistent**, and requires rigorous mentor recruitment, selection & training
- **Districts need support and anti-bias education** to implement equitable hiring practices
- **New leaders desire and need mentors across IL geographies**, e.g. across urban and rural areas

LONG-TERM RETENTION

- **Expectations for principals can be overwhelming and the pay limited**, which can limit retention
- **Leaders need venues to network with their peers for support**, especially leaders of color, e.g., through IPA
- **The ROEs could be a venue for leader capacity building**, though some ROEs have more capacity than others

“I've had cancer three times, I've been divorced, and there's no year in my life that was harder than my first year as a principal.”

- *Current Superintendent*

“I've submitted over 100 applications statewide [and] I've been to 40-50 interviews...and I still [haven't gotten the] opportunity. It's possibly racist ideologies, sometimes I look back on who got the job, usually someone younger and whiter than me in their 30s.”

- *Aspiring Principal of Color*

“My first year as a supe I went to the state supe conference. I was like 31, and I came home, and one of the things I told my wife was that I never want to look like they look. Because everyone looked old and bloated and red faced and exhausted.

The job is hard, and the political arena is vastly more difficult now than it was when I started, social media is hard, and... there's a martyrdom to what we do. That doesn't make it really attractive... **I don't think we're doing a very good job of telling the story of the fulfillment of being a district leader and the impact and legacy that we're trying to leave.”**

- Current Superintendent

“I’m very passionate about being a school leader; it’s the best job in the world. We do a horrible job of showing people the good parts of the job.”

- Current Principal

RECRUITMENT | Themes & Relevant Quotes

THEMES

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

1 Principal recruitment is highly relational, informal & not systematic.

My principal came to me and asked whether I had thought about becoming a building principal. **It hadn't even dawned on me [until then].**

No one tells you you can do this job as a kid [of color]. You don't dream that big because you don't know any better.

2 Candidates of color do pursue the principal role, but experience significant barriers

I used to be very interested in becoming a principal, and now I'm not at all. I wanted to work in my district, applied 3 times, and didn't get it. **I have no desire to lead in Illinois anymore.**

I've seen a **district 'nepotism' [in hiring].**

They say they want to hire [people of color], **but when you interview, it is different.**

3 The current narrative & around education & leadership can dissuade potential leaders of color.

[The perception of] **"I don't wanna be a [broke] teacher" makes it hard to recruit kids** into education.

The reason why there's such a dearth of people of color pursuing education is because many of them have had traumatic experiences at school. **Why would they go back into a traumatic environment?**

4 LEAs/programs can be more proactive in seeking candidates of color & also hire recruiters of color

We're not looking hard enough for [candidates of color]. [My] supe said we can't find any applicants of color & I thought, how hard are we trying? Did we go to historically Black colleges & universities or are we just taking applicants from the pile?

Many colleges have an intent to recruit people of color, but no people of color are involved. **I can't see myself at this program if no one recruiting looks like me.**

“[I’m at] NIU for my principal license finally because I came from the inner city and [I noticed] our kids don’t see administrators that look like them. The people they do see that look like them are cleaning the floors and serving food. [Now] I want to bring those kids into leadership.”

- *Principal Candidate of Color*

“Administrators have to know how to create the culture...[how to be] a thermostat and not just a thermometer.”

- *Superintendent*

“The number one thing people need to be successful [in the principal role] is a vision... I think what happens a lot is a natural ascension to the next role without a distinctive direction... I guarantee we all do the job dramatically differently, and we’ve whittled away at the job description to make it unique to us... **If you don’t have that vision, the job is just going to do you in and becomes immense and unmanageable.”**

- *Current Superintendent*

“We have prepared people to lead from their head and not from their heart. There is not a sense of connection to the community that they are serving and that's the gap. You can have all of the processes and the bells and the whistles but.... our leaders [have to] feel [what] the students and staff [are feeling], and the vibrations in the community.”

- *Current Superintendent*

PREPARATION | Themes & Relevant Quotes

THEMES

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

1 Strong prep supports leaders to be visionary, emotionally aware & community oriented

One of the things I ask in principal interviews is what are you willing to get fired for? **What do you care enough about that you're willing to plant your flag?**

When principals don't succeed, it's not because they're not smart. **Either they lack self-awareness, or can't foster positive, productive working relationships.**

2 Aspiring leaders of color face unique challenges during preparation

For interns [of color] in a majority white school, that's a heavy burden [to bear].

A unique challenge is "**racial battle fatigue**" ...e.g. dealing with microaggressions...[Sometimes we get] pigeonholed into the discipline track and don't develop instructional leadership chops.

3 Programs don't have a shared understanding of how candidates should build & operationalize an 'equity lens'

We don't share understanding of what equity looks like in a school context. [We must] embed practices and instructional delivery to **force [candidates] to critically reflect on their own understandings, beliefs, biases, so they're more self-aware when they step into leadership with people who don't look like them.** Oppressive leaders only see deficits, not assets.

4 Effective preparation provides principals with diverse experiences and a true understanding of what the job is like

The thing that benefitted me the most was being able to **connect with people from all over the state** and finding out how different people did different things.

I've gone to some colleges to speak to new principal groups, **and I always make sure to include a day in the life of a principal.** In your programs, you're doing these projects and reading texts, but it's like, "boom!" when you get in.

“I had a mentor that thought I would be good at [leadership]... **Someone that believed in me told me I could do it**, encouraged me and then supported me.”

- *Retired Superintendent*

“**When I was hired, I felt like a token hire.** They were getting flack for not hiring candidates of color who have the requirements... It’s just a matter of ‘You don’t know the right people’.”

- *Current Teacher Leader*

HIRING & EARLY SUPPORTS | Themes & Relevant Quotes

THEMES

1 Aspiring leaders, especially women leaders of color, experience bias and inconsistency in the hiring process

2 New leaders of color deal with the extra burden of being tokenized/"the first" in their roles

3 Early supports, e.g. mentoring, are critical to equip new leaders, esp. leaders of color

4 Targeted, multi-year cohort mentoring for new leaders is effective but in some cases, stigmatized

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

[Districts] hide behind policies but are **willing to shift these and accept mediocrity from white people instead of accepting a phenomenal Black educator** who will disrupt [the status quo].

When I applied for principalships.... **In some instances, race did play a role** [and in other cases] some people were pulled to the side and told the district isn't ready for a female...

[Leaders of color] are placed on every committee to **get "diversity" checked off.**

Many times when a person of color assumes a leadership role, they may be the first one, and **when you are the first you carry a lot of weight on your shoulders...** That's why networking is absolutely critical and you need connections that allow you to thrive, not just survive.

The job is only lonely at the top if you allow it to be... **Superintendents have been the most supportive peer group I have ever had in my life.**

Everybody needs a buddy; it feel better when I can call my friend who is a principal at another town and we engage on a regular basis... **Collaboration and learning from others support new principals.**

Provide a simple grant to districts, and leaders who apply for it just get it. Some leaders think [coaching is] a sign of weakness, and it's not desirable or accepted yet. There's a rebranding part to this that symbolizes that **we know this is important.**

I think we do a good job of coaching when you first get there... and then you're out on your own. **You need ongoing support...** Start small with a cohort of people, coach them for three years, and bring it to scale.

“The network of peers I have grown over the years has helped me survive these last twelve months of COVID. **It’s been the thing that has saved my life.** Some of the best ideas I’ve come up with I borrowed from a colleague. **I can’t emphasize the importance of a good professional network enough.”**

- *Current Superintendent*

“I am trying to fight the good fight in terms of doing anti-racism work in our community and I’m a straight white male who’s Christian [with] every privilege in the world, [but there is still] all of the resistance I face. **I could not imagine being an African American or person of color in my district trying to do this work. Until there’s some radical paradigm shifting in rural Illinois, I think the opportunities are going to be inherently and unfortunately limited.”**

- *Current Superintendent*

LONG-TERM RETENTION | Themes & Relevant Quotes

THEMES

1 Formal and informal networks are central to retention, especially for leaders of color

2 All leaders require ongoing support, focused on equitable practice, for long-term effectiveness and retention

3 Financial incentives could support retention of leaders of color

4 Statewide diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism training could create belonging for leaders of color

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

We need to broaden the networks for administrators [of color], and many of them (especially in the south of the state) do not have connections with each other.

It's all about where you get your support. Do you get it from your board? Do you get it from your community, your family, your association? **You have to have support if you're out there doing anything.**

If I'm going to be a social justice leader and call out inequities, then I need to be damn sure that you as my superintendent are going to be supportive of me... **When people gripe and complain, will my job be secure?**

[Leaders have to figure out] which practices really reflect the commitment to equity at the school level: the procedures, the rules, the regulations... grading practices, or disciplinary data. **Where do we see reflections of equitable practices?**

If ISBE had scholarships, that would help [improve retention of leaders of color]. That helped in the 80s to bring women into leadership.

There is a need to incentivize by offering scholarships. [One way is] partnerships between the district and a university... to [build the pipeline].

Start with implicit bias [and] cultural responsiveness training, and leaders have to [join]. We had a training and I was [there] as a superintendent right next to our office staff... **We need to listen to each other.**

Even though the recruitment of candidates of color may be there, **they're still walking into environments where the cultures haven't changed.** It's institutionalized racism. There needs to be [district] diversity training, and also some funds for scholarships.

IMPLICATIONS | What might the DDSL address in its Work Plan?

RECRUITMENT

- Leverage relational nature of recruitment, while ensuring candidates of color are being effectively drawn into leader roles
- Address systemic bias in leader hiring
- Build a public relations campaign
- Encourage creative, proactive recruitment of candidates of color

PREPARATION

- Support prep programs to build leadership skills in candidates and provide critical supports to candidates of color
- Understand how to help leaders operationalize an equity lens
- Help prep programs and districts partner to give aspiring leaders diverse practicum experiences & build networks statewide

HIRING & EARLY SUPPORTS

- Support multi-year cohort mentoring for new leaders
- Offer scholarships to new leaders, esp. leaders of color, for executive coaching and professional development
- Connect with organizations like the IPA for additional support

LONG-TERM RETENTION

- Encourage leaders to join statewide professional networks
- Convene and support networks, esp. for leaders of color
- Collect and distribute resources for districts and school boards to improve organizational culture and equitable practices



Appendix C

DDSL Biographies

Martin McGreal, Director



Martin McGreal was born in Chicago, IL. He has worked in public education since 1992. He served in the Chicago Public School system as a teacher, curriculum director, assistant principal and a principal. He also served as a Director for the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center.

From 2007 to 2010, he worked in New Orleans restarting schools and assisting the community redesign one of the first high schools rebuilt since Katrina, L.B. Landry High School. He was the Director for Pathways In Education overseeing schools in Louisiana, Tennessee and Illinois. Marty is now the Director of District and School Leadership for the Illinois State Board of Education.

Tammy Hermes, Consultant*



Tammy Hermes has over 20 years of experience in the field of education. She began her career as an elementary reading specialist, transitioned to an instructional coach, and later filled Principal roles at the High School and PreK-Junior High levels. She has worked in a large district setting as well as a small rural district. Tammy is well versed in social emotional learning, professional development, Cycles of Inquiry, and seeing the big picture of education. She brings valued knowledge and experience of the benefits of principal mentoring after participating in a strong mentor program for 3 years. Currently, she is working as a consultant with the Illinois State Board of Education to develop the new Department of District and School Leadership.

Dr. Patrick Rice, Consultant*

Dr. Patrick Rice is a Clinical Assistant Professor for the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois (U of I) at Champaign-Urbana. Prior to working U of I, Dr. Rice was the former Field Services/Equity Director for the Illinois Association of School Boards for almost a decade. From 2006-2010, Dr. Rice was an adjunct professor for McKendree College in Lebanon, IL and building principal for the Mount Vernon City Schools, District 80. In addition, Dr. Rice was a building superintendent for Danville School District 118 and East St. Louis School District 189. Prior to becoming a superintendent, Dr. Rice taught U.S. History for East St. Louis District 189 and Springfield Public School District 186.



Dr. Rice is the author of three best-selling books: *Equity, From the Boardroom to the Classroom*; *Vanishing School Boards*; and *The Essential Quick Flip Reference Guide for School Board Members*. Dr. Rice has written over twenty-five professional publications in the areas of school governance, leadership and parental/community involvement.

Due to his vast educational experiences, Dr. Rice is a sought-after presenter and has conducted numerous workshops and seminars, including presentations for the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Principals Association, Jefferson County Regional Office of Education, Texas Association of School Boards, Southwest Illinois College and the Midwest Equity Institute.

Dr. Rice enjoys working and networking with diverse groups. In 2010, Dr. Rice was selected to serve on the Illinois State Board Advisory Board. He has also been active with many organizations, such as: Habitat for Humanity, Jefferson County Rotarians, South-Town Youth Program, Mission Possible, Young Professionals for Jefferson County, Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, Phi Delta Kappa, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Illinois Coalition of Educational Equity Leaders, Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and the Black Educational Advocacy Coalition.

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