

Effective and Sustained Principals

for Every Illinois Community



Effective leadership, especially principal leadership, is vital to the success of every school.

With adequate support, resources and time, principals can do extraordinary work to benefit their students, teachers, and communities. Unfortunately, principals today find themselves under-invested, overly stressed, and lacking the time to be effective. Thus, a high number of principals are choosing to leave the profession, and many who

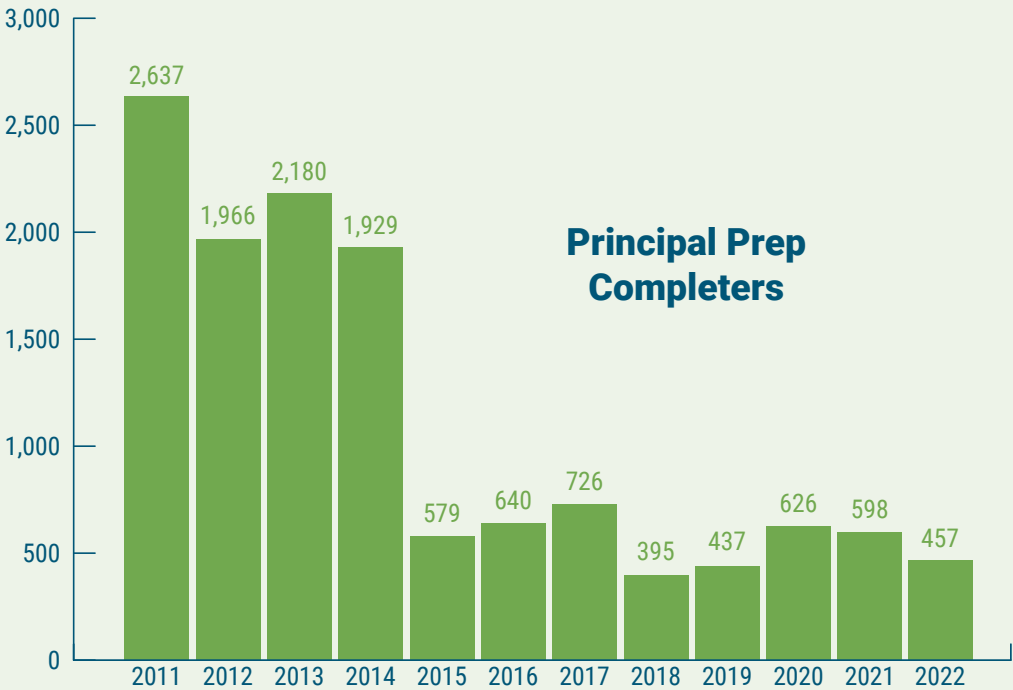
could be outstanding school leaders disregard the principalship as a viable career pathway.

The Illinois Principals Association, an organization serving more than 6,300 school leaders throughout Illinois, intends for this document to serve as a reminder of the critical role principals play in creating effective schools. Further,

it details the serious problem schools face with principal attrition and how attrition is exacerbated in Illinois with a dwindling pipeline. Lastly, recommendations are provided for consideration by policymakers and school districts to help slow attrition and bolster the principal pipeline.

Illinois schools averaged TWO principals at the same school over the past SIX years.

Principal Stressors



Principals' Key Areas of Concern

Mandates and Compliance

School Funding

Compensation

Student SEL Support

Student Assessment

Lack of Parental Support

“

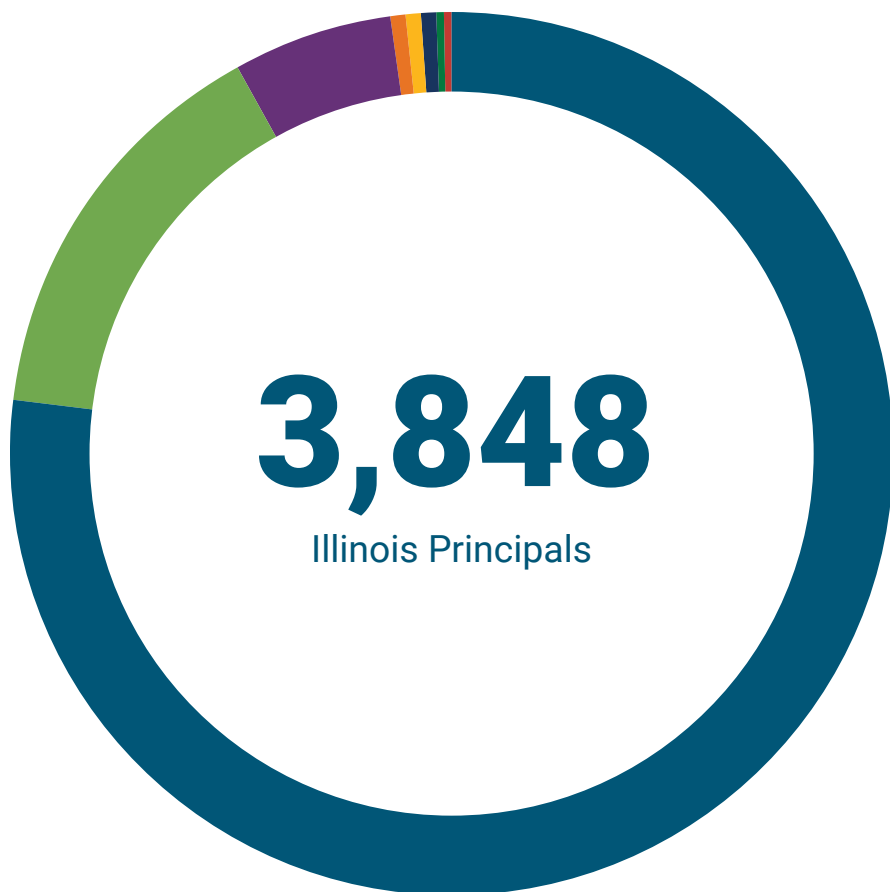
“In many ways, the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal’s leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place; if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching; if students are performing to the best of their ability; one can almost always point to the principal’s leadership as the key to success.”

— U.S. Senate, 1970¹

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Statistics courtesy of the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Principals Association.

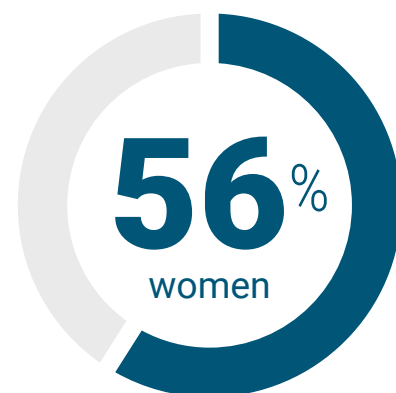
Illinois Principal Profile



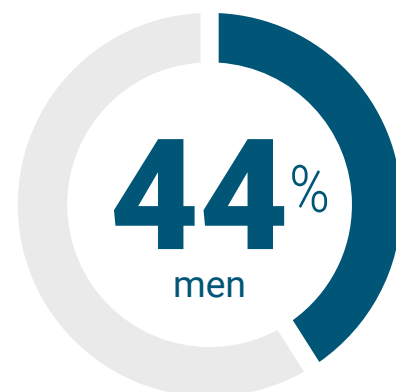
3,848

Illinois Principals

- 77% White
- 15% Black or African American
- 6% Hispanic or Latino
- <1% Unknown
- <1% Multi-Race
- <1% Asian
- <1% American Indian or Alaska Native
- <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander



56%
women



44%
men

46
average age

\$108,403
average salary

11
average years
of experience

31%
have post-master's
degree

Even over a half-century ago, members of the U.S. Senate understood what was needed to ensure the success of our nation's schools, teachers, and ultimately students - School Leadership. Fifty years later, we have the research to back this up. In 2009, the Wallace Foundation determined in their report, *Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders: New Directions and New Processes*:

Effective leadership is vital to the success of a school. Research and practice confirm that there is a slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning.²

More recently, Wallace amped up the importance of school leadership, notably principal

leadership, in its 2021 report, *How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systemic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research*, which states:

The impact of an effective principal has likely been understated, with impacts being both greater and broader than previously believed: greater in the impact on student achievement and broader in affecting other important outcomes, including teacher satisfaction and retention (especially among high-performing teachers), student attendance, and reductions in exclusionary discipline.³

Additionally, researchers have shed light on the central role school leaders must play to ensure all students, especially those who have been historically marginalized, are treated equitably.⁴ Of note,

studies indicate school leaders have the greatest impact on student performance in schools with the greatest needs.⁵ In order to support all students adequately and appropriately, school leaders must dismantle inequitable systems that perpetuate “the gaps” (access, opportunity, achievement, expectations, relationships and hope) resulting in ongoing student failure, chronic absenteeism, high suspension rates, consistently low graduation rates, and systemic racism.⁶

Overall, schools require school leaders who are capable of collaboratively crafting a vision for student success, cultivating a student-centered culture, building others' leadership capacity, improving instruction, and leading school improvement efforts.⁷ Essentially, effective school leaders lead effective schools.⁸

Our Problem of Practice

While we have gained a greater understanding of the importance of school leadership and the impact school leaders have on their learning organizations, our Nation's schools face a serious problem of practice — leadership attrition and churn. A 2023 report from the Institute of Education Sciences highlighted that more than 11 percent of the nation's public school principals serving during the 2020-2021 school year left the profession altogether.⁹ According to a 2019 study from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), principals across the country only have an average tenure of four years at their schools.¹⁰ Drilling deeper into the data paints a stark picture showing that 35 percent of principals are in their schools less than two years with only 11 percent of principals being at their schools for 10+ years. The School Leaders Network plainly states that only 1 in 4 principals stay in a given leadership position longer than 5 years, which is concerning since school leaders require between 5 and 10 years to establish positive, sustainable change in their learning organizations.¹¹

Illinois schools average **2 principals every 6 years.**¹²

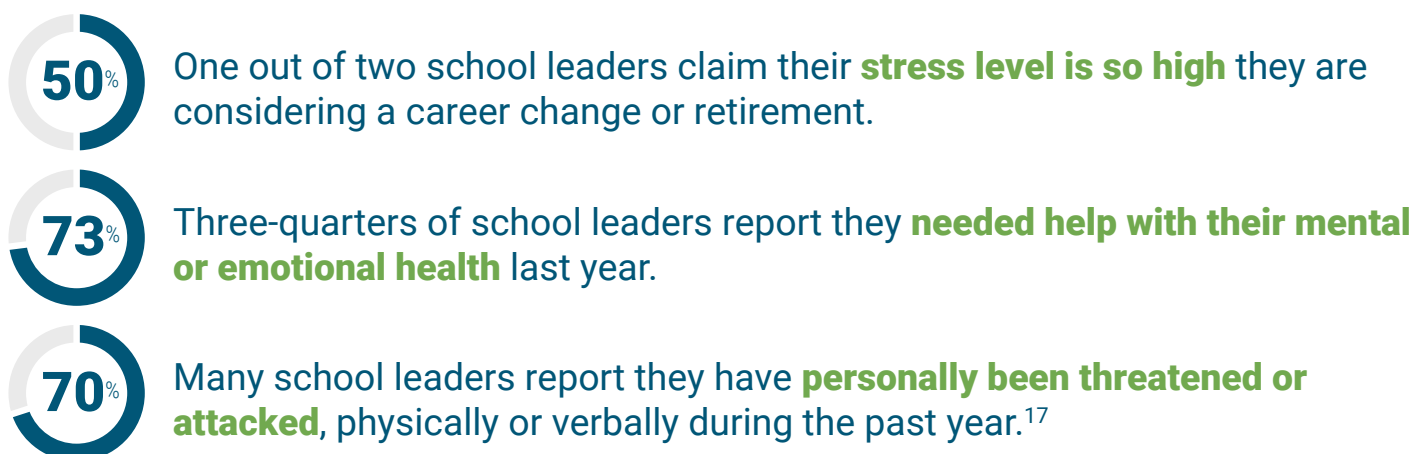


Why Principals May Be Leaving

School leaders choose to leave their positions for a variety of reasons, both positive and negative. District level opportunities, other building level positions or retirement may motivate individuals to move on. While these transitions are likely positive in many circumstances, negative forces have been mounting over the past couple of decades that keep prospective leaders from considering school leadership as a career path, push individuals out of positions, or cause some to leave the profession altogether. These forces include longer hours, mounting mandates, and rising expectations not backed with adequate resources.¹³ In their 2019 report, *Understanding and Addressing Principal Turnover*, NASSP and LPI identified five reasons principals choose to leave their positions:



The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) found in their most recent 10-year study of the principalship (2018) that principals view their position as being increasingly complex, especially when it comes to handling student and staff social emotional issues.¹⁵ Also, principals report they are now spending more than 60 hours a week on the job both inside and outside of their school. A recent survey of Illinois principals by the IPA had principals reporting that they are under extreme stress more than 16 hours every week.¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, residual effects from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to put significant pressure on school leaders. Key findings from a 2022 National Association of Secondary School Principals survey of the nation's school leaders included:



Another post-pandemic effect school leaders face is political divisiveness in their schools and local communities. A joint study of high school principals out of UCLA and the University of California - Riverside stated that more than two-thirds of public high school principals reported working through substantial political conflict tied to divisive issues during the 2021-2022 school year.¹⁸

Illinois' Principal Pipeline is at Historic Lows

Exacerbating principal attrition in Illinois is the fact that the state's principal pipeline has shrunk to historically low levels. According to data retrieved from the Illinois State Board of Education, the number of people completing all requirements to become a principal has dropped more than 82 percent between 2011 and 2022. In 2022, only 457 individuals met the requirements to become a principal compared to 2637 in 2011. This does not meet the demand of open administrative positions (principals, assistant principals, deans, etc.) statewide each year that require the principal endorsement. The chart on the next page provides the historic principal preparation completer data between 2011 and 2022.

Historic Principal Preparation Completer Data

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| American College of Education | 751 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Argosy University | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aurora University | 153 | 86 | 108 | 148 | 8 | 29 | 47 | 91 | 63 | 78 | 71 | 78 |
| Benedictine University | | 148 | 17 | 10 | | | | | | | | |
| Bradley University | 21 | 9 | 10 | 25 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 3 | |
| Chicago State University | 15 | 8 | 21 | 28 | 5 | 4 | 12 | | 10 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Concordia University | 506 | 475 | 759 | 543 | 84 | 123 | 166 | 5 | | 257 | 76 | 10 |
| DePaul University | 27 | 21 | 60 | 40 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 18 | | 4 | 16 |
| Dominican University | 12 | 15 | 19 | 38 | 7 | 16 | 6 | 2 | | | | |
| Eastern Illinois University | 165 | 134 | 126 | 142 | 25 | 31 | 34 | 10 | 15 | 1 | 29 | 34 |
| Governors State University | 136 | 85 | 86 | 51 | | 20 | 31 | 25 | 11 | 11 | 44 | 59 |
| Illinois State University | 23 | 24 | 2 | 6 | | 7 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 14 | | 15 |
| Lewis University | 54 | 18 | 88 | 51 | | 5 | 5 | | 12 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Loyola University (Chicago) | 31 | 24 | 7 | 7 | | | | 5 | 1 | 15 | 1 | 3 |
| McKendree University | 53 | 112 | 95 | 90 | 8 | 19 | 62 | 37 | 36 | 34 | 17 | 19 |
| National-Louis University | 114 | 186 | 103 | 40 | 158 | 166 | 54 | 39 | 40 | 48 | 51 | 36 |
| New Leaders | | | 23 | 27 | 28 | 15 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 5 |
| North Central College | 20 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 18 | 19 | 22 | 11 | 26 | 18 |
| North Park University | | 6 | 48 | | 8 | 6 | 3 | | 25 | 8 | 31 | 14 |
| Northeastern IL University | 92 | 61 | 80 | 86 | 29 | 45 | 63 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 56 | |
| Northern IL University | 71 | 99 | | 44 | 9 | 23 | 11 | 7 | | 11 | 14 | 16 |
| Olivet Nazarene University | 106 | 93 | 114 | 194 | | | | | | | | |
| Quincy University | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Roosevelt University | 18 | 20 | 37 | 23 | | | 17 | 20 | 23 | | 16 | 1 |
| Southern IL University-Carbondale | 7 | 9 | 7 | | | | 6 | 8 | 8 | 3 | | |
| Southern IL University-Edwardsville | 88 | 64 | 87 | 63 | 15 | 12 | 29 | 14 | 27 | 26 | 28 | 21 |
| St. Xavier University | 42 | 87 | 94 | 90 | 87 | 6 | | | | | | |
| University of IL at Chicago | 8 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| University of IL at Springfield | 19 | 37 | 27 | 44 | 5 | 13 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 14 | 13 | 9 |
| University of IL at Urbana-Champaign | 37 | 34 | 37 | 51 | 1 | 22 | 21 | 8 | 35 | 28 | 38 | 33 |
| University of St. Francis | 30 | 63 | 49 | | 8 | 9 | 27 | 28 | 30 | 26 | 27 | 25 |
| Western IL University | 34 | 31 | 54 | 67 | 60 | 28 | 34 | 18 | 15 | 1 | 18 | 15 |
| Total | 2,637 | 1,966 | 2,180 | 1,929 | 579 | 640 | 726 | 395 | 437 | 626 | 598 | 457 |

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Notes: A Completer is defined as an individual who has completed their degree, passed certification exams, and taken initial teacher evaluation training/assessment. Final Type 75 Certifications were issued in 2015.

Stop the Bleeding

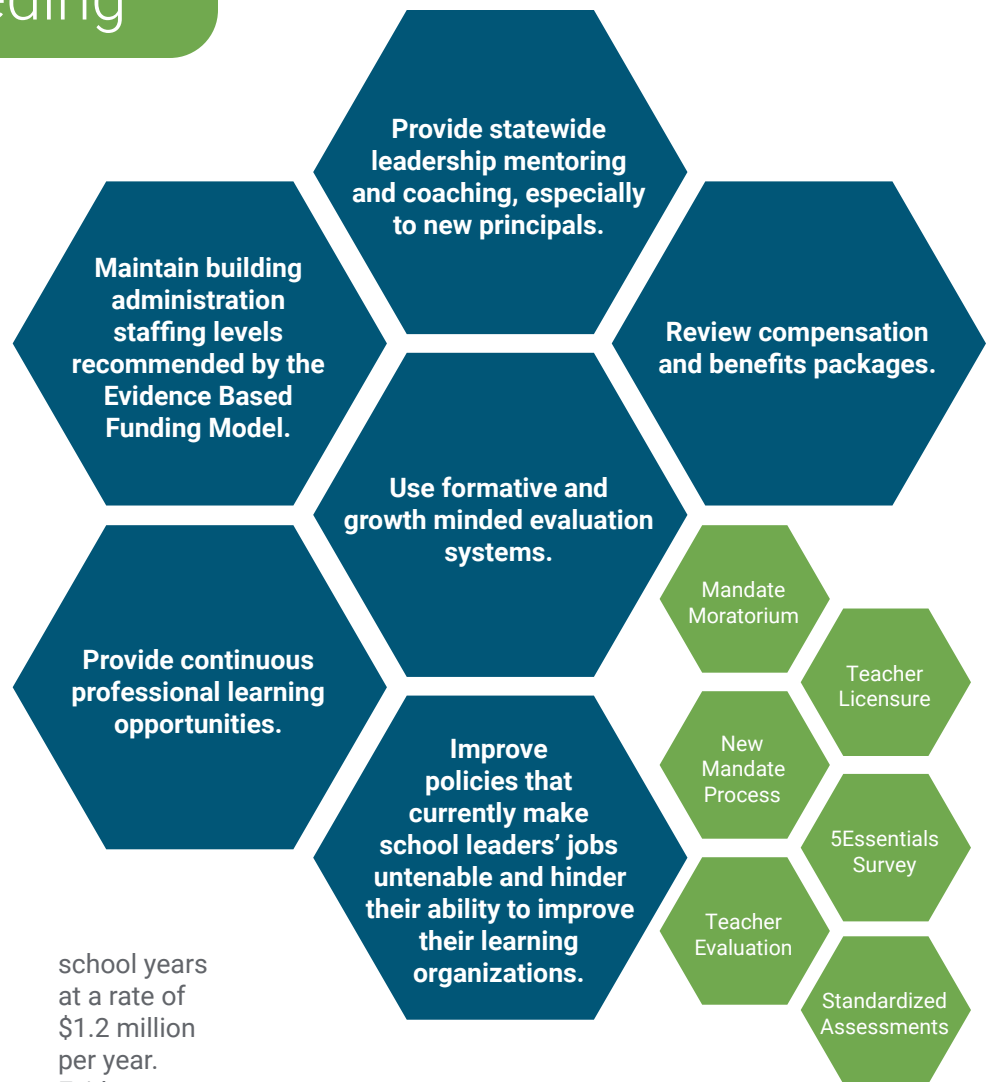
To better support current principals, reduce attrition, and improve student outcomes, the IPA recommends the following:

Maintain building administration staffing levels recommended by the Evidence Based Funding Model.

State statute requires that each school district shall receive the funding required to employ one principal position per 450 students in an elementary school, one principal position per 450 students in a middle school, and one principal position per 600 students in a high school. In addition, each school district should receive funding required to employ one assistant principal position per 450 students in an elementary school, one assistant principal position per 450 students in a middle school, and one assistant principal position per 600 students in a high school.

Provide statewide leadership mentoring and coaching, especially to new principals.

In 2006, Illinois recognized the importance of mentoring new principals to help them build a sustainable foundation for a successful career in school leadership. Public Act 94-1039, subject to appropriation, required new principals to be paired with an experienced school leader who is trained to be an effective mentor. ISBE dedicated \$3.6 million of Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds to support new principals during the FY22, FY23, and FY24



school years at a rate of \$1.2 million per year. Evidence from new principals who received mentoring these last few years has shown to positively impact their leadership skills and sustain them in the profession.¹⁹ However, ESSER dollars will not be available starting with the FY25 school year. Thus, the state should cover the cost, \$1.2 million annually, for new principal mentoring to continue.

Provide continuous professional learning opportunities. The IPA views principals as learning leaders leading learning organizations. To ensure principals continue to improve and model what they expect from students and staff, they must be afforded the time and resources to engage in meaningful professional learning experiences. The IPA has developed a cycle of inquiry tool to help school leaders intentionally

develop and monitor a growth process aimed at improving their performance. ISBE should consider leveraging this tool to not only support school leader growth but also the continuous improvement of school leaders' learning organizations.

Use formative and growth minded evaluation systems. To encourage principals' efforts to be learning leaders, they must be supported with evaluation systems that are growth-minded and provide routine, formative feedback. Too often, principal evaluation systems are compliance driven and lack meaning for the individuals those systems are meant to support. This can be changed by engaging with principals to collaboratively develop feedback loops and other systems that support their work to improve their practice.²⁰ The

IPA has developed the School Leader Evaluation Plan, a growth-minded evaluation system. ISBE should consider encouraging statewide adoption of the plan and embed training of the plan in the PERA required principal evaluator training.

Review compensation and benefits packages. The statutorily required increases of teacher salaries required by Public Act 101-0443 has caused bottom-up pressure on teacher compensation overall. Thus, some teachers at the top of their salary schedules are outpacing the compensation of their school leaders, especially when calculating salaries on a per diem basis. As a result, school leaders are disincentivized from staying in their positions, and aspiring leaders are disincentivized from even considering school leadership as a viable career path.

Improve policies that currently make school leaders' jobs untenable and hinder their ability to improve their learning organizations. Since 2000, the School Code has doubled in size. While there has been important legislation passed over the last 20+ years which positively impacts schools (i.e. the Evidence-Based Funding Formula), several statutes, many unfunded, have been codified requiring school leaders to do additional work with little to no additional resources or time. Further, some statutes have not shown to have a demonstrable positive impact on adult and student performance. Policies that should be reviewed immediately include:

- **Place a Moratorium on All New Mandates while Reviewing Current Mandates** – Policy makers should place a moratorium on all new mandates to engage stakeholders in a review of current mandates to determine their necessity. Mandates determined to be ineffective should be discontinued immediately. For those that remain, adequate resources must be provided so they can be implemented with fidelity.
- **Develop a Process to Determine the Necessity of New Mandates** – Due to the large number of current mandates and that many mandates are passed without fully vetting the time, finances, personnel, and systems needed to implement more mandates with fidelity, a process should be developed by which to determine the necessity of new mandates. When deciding whether to institute a new mandate, consideration should be given to whether the mandate erodes educators' autonomy and authority, aligns with leading, teaching, and learning standards, is fiscally responsible, and aligns with ISBE's strategic plan amongst other requirements.
- **Teacher Licensure** – It is no mystery that the educator shortage is real as school leaders throughout the state wrestle with finding sufficient individuals to fill open teaching positions across all grade levels and content areas. While ISBE has made strides to remove barriers to earning a teaching license, more needs to be done. For instance, removing the edTPA requirement for

student teaching candidates, reworking the teaching endorsement grade bands, and allowing teacher preparation programs to offer post-bachelor's teacher endorsements that maintain rigor but are streamlined would prove helpful.

- **Teacher Evaluation** – Few policy changes in recent years have required more time and attention from school leaders than the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. The IPA appreciates the General Assembly's call to review PERA's requirements to identify how the current statute can better inform improving educator performance and make the evaluation requirements more tenable to administer. Regardless of the outcome of the study, efforts must be made to ensure the evaluation process is growth focused and streamlined so educators are able to gain back minutes for other essential work.
- **The 5Essentials Survey** – The IPA is fully supportive of school leaders surveying their school and community stakeholders for feedback and possibilities for improvement. However, the 5Essentials Survey continues to pose problems as a statewide instrument for schools to assess stakeholder perceptions. For example, the survey was constructed for a large urban setting, so questions, in some cases, use language that does not match the context of certain parts of the state. Further, the raw data from survey respondents too often is misaligned with the rating generated by the survey, which causes for lack of trust in the survey overall. To quickly remedy this issue, ISBE should stop generating a rating from the 5Essentials and only report the raw results.
- **Standardized Assessments** – In 2022, ISBE gathered feedback from stakeholders to inform what improvements to state assessment should be prioritized and how ISBE might support these improvements. Through the Center for Assessment, stakeholder feedback was gathered and analyzed regarding the state assessment program and possible future directions. The recommendations included: develop state interim assessment supports and/or resources that are decoupled from summative uses; develop criteria for "high quality" interim assessments; create model resources and/or a "vetted list" of interim assessments; provide professional training to support more effective assessment practices; accelerate and improve assessment reporting; develop a theory of action for state assessments; explore strategies to shorten the end-of-year test; consider transitioning from fixed form to an adaptive design; and, importantly, proceed deliberately and responsively. Further, the IPA believes ISBE should study current assessment cut scores which tend to suppress student performance in Illinois when compared to their peers across the country.

Rebuild Illinois' Principal Pipeline

Adopt the School Leader Paradigm as the state's principal leadership framework. In 2022, the IPA and 14 other principals' associations from across the United States published the third iteration of the School Leader Paradigm.²¹ This innovative school leader framework not only outlines the work highly effective principals do, but the Paradigm also specifies the internal competencies and attributes principals must possess to do their work effectively.

Study why individuals are not choosing school leadership as a viable career path. While some broad data exists as to why individuals are not choosing to become school leaders (i.e. working conditions, compensation, etc.), work should be done to contextualize this data for Illinois. Special attention should be given to the effect of Tier 2 and Tier 3 pensions. Anecdotal evidence has begun to present itself that young people are choosing other career paths than education due to the reduced benefits and the prospect of not receiving a full pension until age 67.

Begin identifying prospective school leaders earlier in their education career. Current school leaders must intentionally seek out and identify individuals who possess the competencies and attributes needed to be effective principals. From the beginning of their careers in education, these promising individuals should be encouraged to consider school leadership by being provided opportunities to lead, support with attaining advanced degrees, and encouragement to grow their professional learning network by connecting with current and future school leaders.

Continue to offer scholarships and other incentives for individuals who choose the principalship as a career path, especially for Black, Latinx and other underrepresented groups. Financial incentives, including scholarships and paid internships, should be offered to those pursuing the principalship, especially for those committed to serving in underperforming schools. These incentives are especially critical for Black, Latinx, and other groups who are significantly underrepresented in the principalship. For example, 17 percent of the student population in Illinois is Black while 14 percent

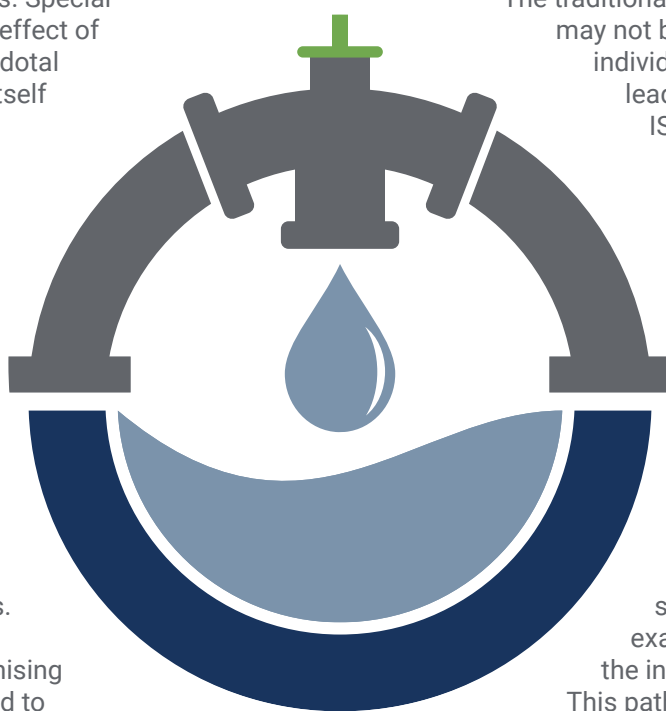
of the principals are Black. The disparity is worse for Latinx students who make up 27 percent of the student population and only 6 percent of Illinois principals are Latinx.²² In FY22, FY23, and FY24, the state allocated \$1.8 million of funding to support the development of the principal pipeline with an emphasis of improving its diversity. These funds are being used to support the preparation of a diverse cohort of 185 aspiring school leaders over a two-year period. The state allocation should be doubled to \$3.6 million annually beginning in FY25 to support the simultaneous development of two cohorts, one in its first year of preparation and the other in its second.

Support alternative pathways to the principalship.

The traditional pathway to the principalship may not be a viable option for some individuals who desire to be a school leader, especially veteran educators. ISBE recently approved Aurora University's Alternative Principal Endorsement Program for individuals with a master's degree in education, which is now accepting candidates. Individuals who choose this pathway can earn their principal endorsement by taking the principal internship and earning 14 skills-based micro-credentials from the IPA's Ed Leaders Network platform. Candidates must also pass the state's two principal certification exams (195 & 196) and complete the initial teacher evaluator training.

This pathway is more cost-effective and can be done in a year's time as compared to the traditional route of earning the endorsement by earning a degree. The IPA is exploring the use of micro-credentials within other principal prep programs including the University of Illinois-Springfield and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Remove 6 percent cap penalty for individuals who transfer in-district from an instructional position to an administrative position. This salary cap provision prevents school districts from "growing their own" educators into needed administrative positions. For example, an educator would need to seek employment in a different district to receive greater than a 6 percent earned salary increase for their added educational experience, credentials, and licensure as an administrator.



While “crisis” is not a term to be used or taken lightly, it is not an understatement to say that the rate of principal attrition and the lack of individuals entering the principalship in Illinois are at crisis points.

Policymakers and school districts must make a concerted effort to invest in both current and future school leaders. The recommendations offered in this document are meant to jumpstart conversations to develop strategies that ensure every school has an effective and sustained principal.

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The IPA serves more than 6,300 school leaders across Illinois including principals, assistant principals, deans, aspiring, and other school leaders. With a mission of developing, supporting, and advocating for innovative educational leaders, the Association serves its members by providing high quality professional learning, community building opportunities, and advocacy with state and federal policymakers. You can learn more about the IPA by visiting **ilprincipals.org**.

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