

Editor's Note: Who's Ready to Be a Principal?

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By The Editors

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Most of the nation's 90,000 public school principals start their education careers in the classroom. They are teachers first.

Along the way, most of the teachers who aspire to the principalship will land in a university-based preparation program. There, they take a series of courses and obtain some in-the-field experience that leads them to the required credentials to become a school leader. But very often, those programs don't bestow the knowledge and skills that make would-be principals truly ready for the complex job that awaits.

Why?

For starters, the job has changed dramatically in recent years, especially the expectations around what effective principals must be able to do. They must know how to coach teachers to become better at instruction. They must create and maintain a school climate where all students and educators can flourish. And, increasingly, they need to know how to attend to the full array of children's needs, not just their academic ones.

While there are exceptions, many traditional, university-based preparation programs haven't kept pace with those changing demands of the profession. But harping on higher education's shortfalls or relying on niche, alternative training programs isn't the answer.

So how can we get better at preparing our next generation of principals?

In this report on the state of principal preparation, *Education Week* explores how some states, school districts, institutions of higher education, and alternative programs are ramping up efforts to groom prospective principals who are trained in the mosaic of skills necessary to be successful at running schools.

We start by looking at how a new set of national standards is helping shift the focus of principal-training programs and the powerful role states can play. We take a close look at some specialized programs that are attempting to fill principals' knowledge gaps in areas such as equity. The pressure on university-based programs to adapt has intensified, and our story digs into the research to explain the kinds of changes states and higher education are likely to embrace.

Finally, we look at Illinois' leading-edge effort to overhaul principal prep and what the early results look like.

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