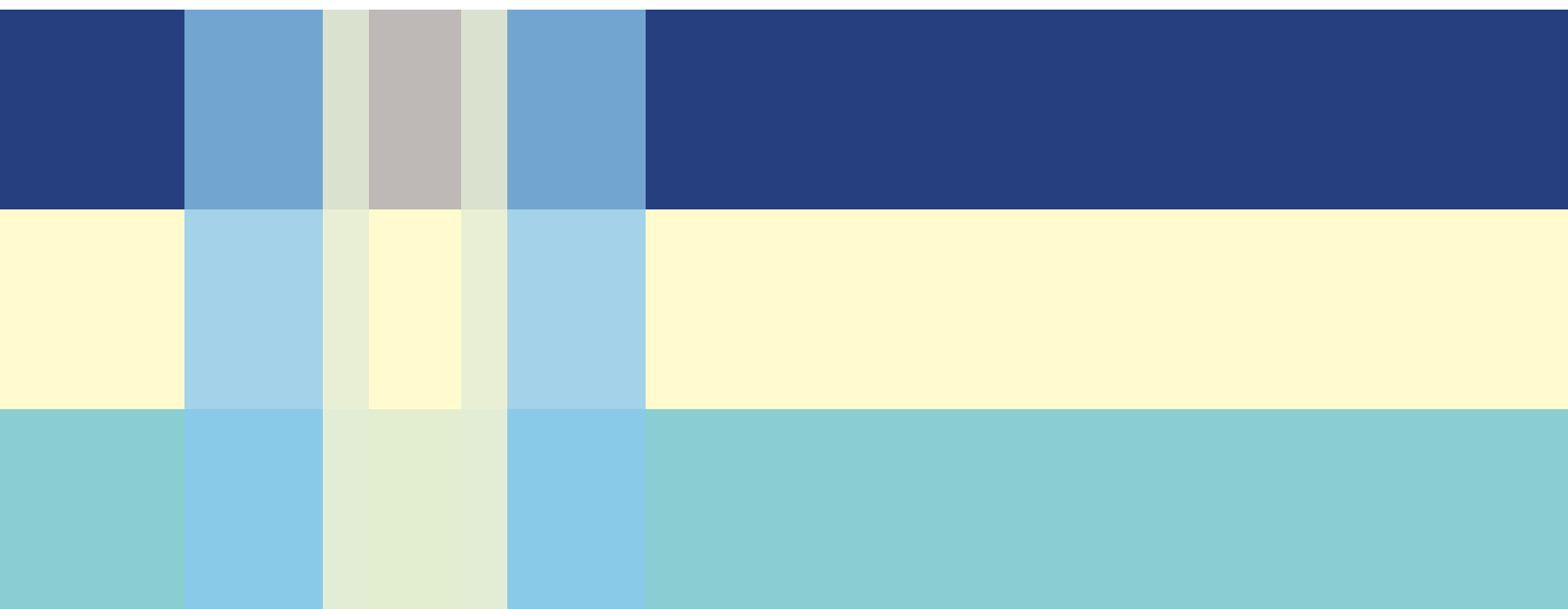


Districts Taking Charge of the Principal Pipeline

POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES, INC.

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Commissioned by:



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EDUCATION

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The Wallace Foundation®

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Preface

This is the third report from an evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative. The Wallace Foundation is sponsor of the initiative and of the evaluation, which is conducted by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., and RAND. This report analyzes progress in the initiative's implementation in the six participating school districts from grant award in August 2011 through mid-2014.



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Summary

Six urban school districts received support from The Wallace Foundation to address the critical challenge of supplying schools with effective principals. The experiences of these districts may point the way to steps other districts might take toward this same goal. Since 2011, the districts have participated in the Principal Pipeline Initiative, which set forth a comprehensive strategy for strengthening school leadership in four interrelated domains of district policy and practice:

1. Leader standards to which sites align job descriptions, preparation, selection, evaluation, and support.
2. Preservice preparation that includes selective admissions to high-quality programs.
3. Selective hiring, and placement based on a match between the candidate and the school.
4. On-the-job evaluation and support addressing the capacity to improve teaching and learning, with support focused on needs identified by evaluation.

The initiative also brought the expectation that district policies and practices related to school leaders would build the district's capacity to advance its educational priorities.

The foundation selected the six sites, in part because they had already launched some policies and practices consistent with these components, and awarded grants of \$7.5 million to \$12.5 million over five years. The initiative also provided technical assistance. The districts agreed to adopt and implement approaches to standards-based preparation, selection, evaluation, and support for school leaders consistent with the initiative's specifications. The districts are:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina
- Denver Public Schools, Colorado
- Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia
- Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida
- New York City Department of Education, New York
- Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland

The evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative has a dual purpose: to analyze the processes of implementing the required components in the participating districts from 2011 through 2015; and then to assess the results achieved in schools led by principals whose experiences in standards-based preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support have been consistent with the initiative's requirements. This report addresses imple-

mentation of all components of the initiative as of 2014, viewing implementation in the context of districts' aims, constraints, and capacity.

Data collection for this report took place during the first three years after the initiative's August 2011 launch. Data sources were: (1) semi-structured interviews with administrators in district central offices and partners during site visits in each spring, 2012 through 2014; (2) focus groups with novice principals and assistant principals (i.e., those in their first, second, and third years in their position) in spring 2013 and 2014; (3) surveys of novice principals and assistant principals in spring 2013 and spring 2014; (4) documents including the districts' proposals, work plans, and progress reports; and (5) observation of and participation in cross-site meetings from 2011 through 2014.

Looking at the Whole Leadership Pipeline

As the Principal Pipeline Initiative matured over three years, districts were rapidly developing the capacity to take a strategic look at the flow of talent into the principalship. The increasing availability of data opened the way to more active management of career progressions for aspiring leaders, using approaches that we describe in the subsequent chapters of this report. In particular, the Leader Tracking Systems required and supported by the Principal Pipeline Initiative could inform this kind of active management.

Although not all districts had fully developed datasets with which they could analyze the pathways taken by their new principals, all district leaders were well aware that positions as assistant principals were part of the usual sequence. Their scrutiny of that position and their consideration of ways to raise the bar for assistant principal performance showed the strategic thinking that they were bringing to bear. Our survey data suggest that they could also look strategically at the responsibilities assigned to other leadership positions within schools, which may also provide important preparation for the principals who will take office some years in the future.

Leader Standards

A mandate to develop standards would not necessarily lead to active, continuing use of the standards, but in this initiative that is what ensued. Each district engaged in a multi-year process of developing and then refining leader standards—statements of the competencies and performance expected of principals. They developed and adapted indicators of competency and performance appropriate to various career stages, such as the stage of application to a preparation program or that of first-year principalship. Rather than leave their standards and competencies entombed in binders on their shelves, these districts' leaders put them to active use in structuring principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. They treated the standards as living documents, and they expected to make further revisions.

Preservice Leader Preparation

The districts took strong roles in reshaping preservice preparation. They developed or extended their own in-house preparation programs. They also forged stronger relationships and engaged in more active, de-

manding communication with universities and alternate-route programs that prepared their principals. They worked with these partner programs to collect and review data on program features and outcomes.

Principals newly hired in the three years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 reported that they were well prepared for their responsibilities in such key areas as instructional leadership. These principals had been prepared through universities, alternate-route programs, and district offerings. Overall, their survey responses were fairly consistent with those of graduates of exemplary programs surveyed by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007).

Selective Hiring and Placement

During the grant period, all six districts revised the hiring process with further development and specification of hiring stages, criteria, and roles. They added new stages of assessment and selection for aspiring leaders well before the actual hiring stage. The results were hiring processes that were more systematic, deliberate, and standards-based:

- Every district had a new or modified screening step producing a pool of candidates who were allowed to apply for leadership positions.
- Every district developed or modified selection criteria or instruments aligned with standards.
- Every district was using data on candidates and schools in more systematic ways to match candidates to specific school positions where district leaders believed they would be the best fit.

Two districts, Denver and Hillsborough County, began conducting district-wide succession planning, using their improved data on potential principal vacancies to inform the overall hiring process. Finally, there was a noticeable sense of excitement in the districts around what officials saw as improvements in the hiring process. They were pleased with their use of added selection stages and assessments, and they expected to do more when they had easier access to still more data.

Evaluation and Support

Districts added capacity for evaluation and support by hiring and training additional principal supervisors and mentors or coaches. They built and at least piloted new evaluation criteria aligned with their leader standards, a process that required multiple rounds of clarifying the criteria and preparing supervisors to use them. As of 2014, they were working to develop the skills of both supervisors and coaches in supporting leaders, and they were planning to use data on individual leaders' strengths and weaknesses to support greater differentiation of professional learning.

Conclusions

Across components, district leaders were thinking strategically and seeing the feasibility of making long-term improvements in their principal corps through new policies and practices and the development of new capacity. They were especially enthusiastic about using new longitudinal data about principals and aspiring principals to inform both individual-level staffing decisions and also organizational decisions about strengthening leader preparation and support. The Leader Tracking Systems that they were building as part of the Principal Pipeline Initiative were expected to play an important role as a source of data for these decisions and were seen as an especially important addition to district capacity.

District leaders also saw challenges ahead. In particular, they saw a need to redesign the assistant principalship as a learning opportunity for future principals. As of 2014 they had not made detailed plans in this regard, but they recognized the potential value of doing so.

Future Evaluation Reporting

This report is not the last word on the Principal Pipeline Initiative. Future reports on implementation and on effects will assess the actions taken by districts and their partner institutions in this initiative. A special-focus implementation report in 2015 will analyze principal evaluation systems. A 2016 report will assess implementation of the initiative overall, identifying the structures and policies put in place, the results observed, and factors that have supported or impeded the sites' progress in carrying out their plans. After the end of the sites' grant period, the final report from the evaluation will analyze the effects of "pipeline principals"—those prepared, selected, and supported in ways consistent with the initiative's design—on important school outcomes, including growth in student achievement.

1. Introduction

Six urban school districts are taking on the critical challenge of supplying their schools with effective principals, and their experiences may point the way to steps that other districts might take toward this same goal. With support from The Wallace Foundation, the districts have participated since 2011 in the Principal Pipeline Initiative. The initiative reflects a comprehensive strategy for strengthening school leadership in four interrelated domains of district policy and practice:

1. Leader standards to which sites align job descriptions, preparation, selection, evaluation, and support.
2. Preservice preparation that includes selective admissions to high-quality programs.
3. Selective hiring, and placement based on a match between the candidate and the school.
4. On-the-job evaluation and support addressing the capacity to improve teaching and learning, with support focused on needs identified by evaluation.

The foundation made a multi-year commitment to the six sites, which were selected in part because they had already launched some policies and practices consistent with these components. The districts receive grants of \$7.5 million to \$12.5 million over five years, along with technical assistance supported by the foundation, to expand and improve on their existing practices and to build toward a strong, sustainable policies and investments in school leadership. They agreed to adopt and implement approaches to standards-based preparation, selection, evaluation, and support for school leaders consistent with the initiative's specifications, which are described below. Each district also agreed that a large number of its new principals would experience these approaches within just a few years of the initiative's start-up, by 2015. The districts are:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina
- Denver Public Schools, Colorado
- Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia
- Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida
- New York City Department of Education, New York
- Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland

Background: Design of the Principal Pipeline Initiative

After a decade of supporting research and program innovations in educational leadership, The Wallace Foundation saw compelling evidence that a principal has a pivotal role in a school's instructional quality (see for example Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, et al., 2010) and that urban districts have the power to reshape principal preparation and support (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). Now, in its Principal Pipeline Initiative, the foundation is testing the proposition that a school district's programs, partnerships, policies, and practices can supply all or most of its schools with principals who are strong instructional leaders—strong enough to make a difference in school outcomes. The foundation's 2011 request for proposals expressed the initiative's central hypothesis in the following terms (Wallace Foundation, p. 2):

If an urban district and its principal training programs provide large numbers of talented, aspiring principals with the right "pre-service" training and on-the-job evaluation and supports, the result will be a pipeline of principals able to improve teaching quality and student achievement district-wide, especially in schools with the greatest needs.

The initiative reflects the belief that districts can do much to develop and support principals as effective instructional leaders if they reshape traditional, often haphazard preparation and hiring processes for aspiring principals and if they restructure evaluation and support for new principals. The foundation intends to learn whether the participating urban districts can improve school leadership by means of an intentionally crafted system of clearly stated expectations, selection gateways, and opportunities for professional growth for new school leaders, implemented at scale.

The Wallace Foundation's request for proposals spelled out the four components of the pipeline to be implemented and tested in the districts: leader standards; high-quality preservice training; selective hiring and placement; and on-the-job evaluation and support. All four components were expected to work together. Preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support would all be aligned to the same standards and thus would be mutually reinforcing. Specifically, key elements of each component would be the following;

- **STANDARDS** for leadership would specify the capabilities and performance that the district wanted in principals, and the district would shape all its policies and practices related to aspiring and novice school leaders around these standards. In addition to using the standards as criteria for hiring principals, districts would ensure that preparation programs use the standards in admissions and in instruction; that the evaluation of new principals would assess the extent to which they meet each standard; and that on-the-job support would specifically address any gaps between standards and performance.
- **PRESERVICE PREPARATION** programs for aspiring leaders, whether lodged in universities, non-profit organizations, or districts themselves, were required to meet several specifications based on the findings of a major Wallace-supported study of exemplary preservice programs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Admissions would be selective, with appli-

cants recruited and then screened according to the district's standards for school leadership. The programs' curricula, too, would align with district standards. In addition, the programs would organize participants into cohort groups that would collaborate and progress together; link theory and practice through instructional approaches such as problem-based learning; and offer robust clinical experiences, expertly supervised. Drawing also on the findings of Orr and colleagues (2010), the initiative emphasized the importance of ongoing program improvement based on data about the quality of graduates' preparation and, for programs based in universities or nonprofits, a partnership that would give the district a substantial role in shaping the program.

- In **HIRING AND PLACEMENT**, the initiative called for “rigorous processes of selection and matching.” Selection procedures would be designed to collect relevant information about applicants' capabilities and to identify the strongest candidates by systematically assessing their capabilities against district standards. Districts would then assign new principals only to schools for which their particular strengths would be a good match. The initiative design further specified that districts should give preference in hiring to the graduates of those preparation programs that they judged to be of high quality.
- Finally, **ON-THE-JOB EVALUATION AND SUPPORT** for school leaders would also be aligned with standards. Districts would systematically evaluate novice principals' instructional leadership capabilities, give them feedback, and, on the basis of the evaluation results, provide professional development and skilled mentoring to support them in further developing their needed capabilities. The initiative defines novices as those in their first, second, and third years in the position.

The initiative also brought the expectation that district policies and practices related to school leaders would build the district's capacity to advance its educational priorities. All components would closely reflect the district's strategic priorities and would achieve district-wide scale and long-term sustainability. Building leadership capacity aligned to a larger agenda has become a goal of the initiative.

From the beginning, The Wallace Foundation made several decisions that reflected its sense of urgency about testing the power of the pipeline to affect student performance. Because the aim was to measure outcomes within just a few years, and because it would take time for new cohorts of principals both to experience the pipeline components and to make a difference in their schools, there was no time to waste on a slow start-up. In search of grantee districts that had a head start on implementation, the foundation invited applications from districts that enjoyed reputations for high-quality work on school leadership, and in the competition it awarded points for the “degree to which most of the components are already in place and of good to high quality” (Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 8). It also made clear to grantee districts that continued funding would depend on their success in placing substantial numbers of “pipeline principals” in schools by January 2015, less than three and a half years after grant award. With this deadline in mind, the foundation pressed for especially fast implementation of the initiative's preservice preparation component so as to ensure that high-quality programs would be in place and producing many new principal candidates by that date. Changes in evaluation and support could be implemented at a slower pace if necessary, but would be in place by mid-2015.

Another important dimension of the initiative's design was active partnership between grantees and The Wallace Foundation. This included not only each district's ongoing dialogue with senior foundation officials about detailed work plans and budgets, but also extensive opportunities to receive technical assistance from providers vetted by the foundation and to participate in the initiative's Professional Learning Communities. The technical assistance included skilled help for each district in setting up its new data system, called a Leader Tracking System, as a repository for individual-level, longitudinal information about aspiring and novice leaders. The system would include data on the individual's preparation and certification history, positions held and the schools in which he or she had held them, assessed skills and performance in each position, and participation in professional development and coaching.

The initiative design addressed the ongoing improvement of pipeline components through data. For example, by using the Leader Tracking System to review aggregate data on the performance of the graduates of each preservice program, districts could identify the programs with which they wanted to continue close partnerships and those that needed improvement. This discerning approach to partnership with preparation programs was also to be supported by technical assistance in using Quality Measures, a suite of tools designed by Education Development Center with Wallace support, including indicators and rubrics for assessing leader preparation programs in a facilitated review of evidence. The foundation provided facilitation as part of its assistance with this initiative.

This Report and the Overall Initiative Evaluation

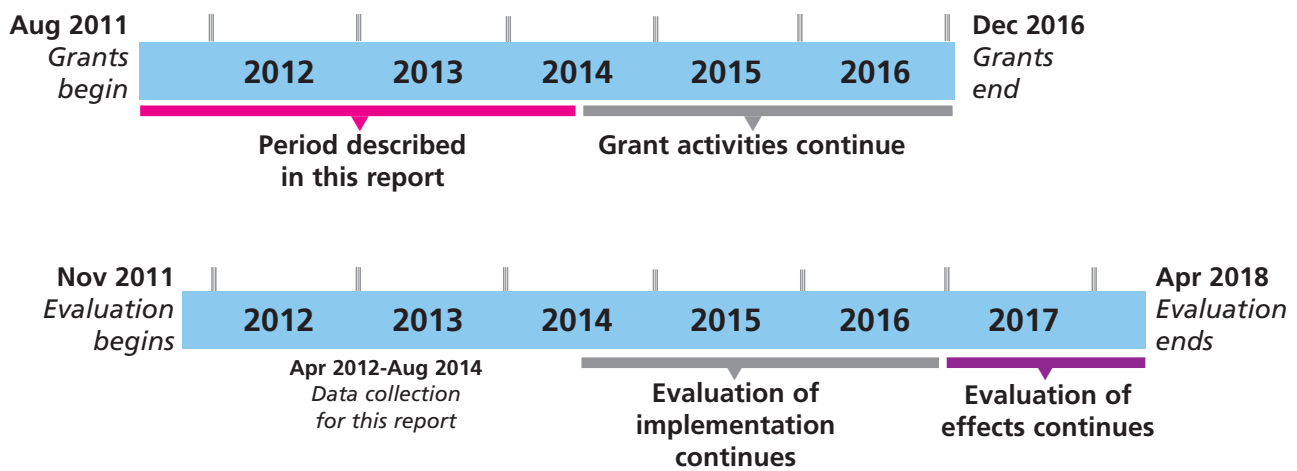
This report addresses implementation of all components of the initiative as of 2014, viewing implementation in the context of districts' aims, constraints, and capacity. Previous reports in this series described the districts' plans and first-year activities (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, MacFarlane, & Anderson, 2013) and analyzed the preparation and support for school leaders offered by districts and their partners (Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2013). These reports and two future reports on implementation are part of a multi-year evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative that has a dual purpose: to analyze the processes of implementing the initiative's components in the participating districts from 2011 to 2015; and then to assess the results achieved in schools led by principals whose experiences in standards-based preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support have been consistent with the initiative's design.

The evaluation team is issuing reports while districts are introducing changes in their policies and practices under the initiative, with the result that the findings in this and other implementation reports are preliminary in several ways. District data on individual principals' experience with the initiative (such as the numbers of principals hired under particular procedures) are not yet complete but will become available for evaluators' use beginning in 2015 through the Leader Tracking Systems. A separate study is beginning to analyze costs.

This report is neither the first nor the last word on implementation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative. Data collection for this report took place during the first three years after the initiative's August 2011 launch. Two years remain in the sites' grant period, and implementation is a work in progress (Exhibit 1). In each year of the evaluation's data collection, district leaders described policies and practices that they saw as

consistent with the initiative’s intent, but in general not enough time had passed for them to offer more than preliminary impressions of the results of those policies and practices. Most district leaders spoke in interviews about key policies and practices they still intended to change in order to meet new or continuing challenges. The principals and assistant principals surveyed as part of the evaluation (as described below) might or might not have experienced the current policies and practices, depending on the career stage that each respondent had reached at the time a practice had been introduced. For example, a principal appointed in 2013 might have completed formal preparation programs in 2010 and have been selected into a pool of principal candidates in 2012, before current practices went into effect.

Exhibit 1: Timeline of the grants, the evaluation, and this report



We offer this report’s findings as a picture of a substantial initiative, still under development in each site, that has already generated early lessons for the participating districts. In each chapter, “takeaways” capture district leaders’ experiences to date, which may provide food for thought for other districts. It is true that these six districts had considerable staff capabilities and also enjoyed funding and technical assistance from the Principal Pipeline Initiative. Still, their experiences and plans suggest strategies that other districts could explore, and their reflections suggest pitfalls and opportunities in implementation.

Data Sources

This report is based on an analysis of data collected by the evaluation team from the following sources: (1) semi-structured interviews with administrators in district central offices and partner organizations during site visits in spring 2012, 2013, and 2014 (Exhibit 2); (2) focus groups with novice principals and assistant principals (i.e., those in their first, second, and third years in their position) in spring 2013 and 2014; (3) surveys of novice principals and assistant principals in spring 2013 and spring 2014 (Exhibit 3); (4) documents including the districts’ proposals, work plans, and progress reports; and (5) observation of and participation in cross-site meetings from 2011 through 2014, including observation of presentations and panel discussions by district and partner-program leaders.

Exhibit 2: District and partner interview respondents, by district, 2012-14

District	2012	2013	2014
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	14	22	11
Denver	19	21	13
Gwinnett County	14	15	16
Hillsborough County	17	18	30
New York City	8	14	18
Prince George's County	19	23	16
Total	91	113	104

Exhibit reads: In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 14 district or partner staff members were interviewed in 2012.

Site-visit interviews were arranged by the project director in each district, responding to specifications from the evaluation team. We requested interviews with the project director, the superintendent (or, in New York City, another high-level official in the central office); other members of the executive team such as the directors of human capital, curriculum and instruction, and data systems; and central-office staff and partner-program leaders who were, collectively, knowledgeable about standards, job descriptions, preparation programs, hiring and placement, supervision, evaluation, and support for principals. In making arrangements for the visit, each project director determined how many individuals could effectively inform the site-visiting team about each function without placing undue burden on district staff. Where two or three people worked closely together on a particular function, the team typically conducted a joint interview with them. In some cases project directors arranged one or more larger group interviews (e.g., the eight principal supervisors in Hillsborough County were interviewed in two groups in 2014, as were the eight principal coaches in that district).

Interview questions were designed to elicit the respondents' descriptions and assessments of each component of the Principal Pipeline Initiative in their local site as well as their overall perceptions of district policies and practices related to the principalship. A semi-structured protocol included not only factual questions but also probes for the respondents' perceptions of what district practices appeared to be serving the intended purposes, what practices appeared to need improvement, and what changes (if any) were under consideration. The comments made by district staff and partners in the initiative's twice-yearly gatherings also informed the evaluation team's understanding and are the source of a few illustrative quotes in this report.

Focus groups with novice principals and assistant principals were conducted in each district in 2013 and 2014. Project directors identified the participants. The focus groups' comments provided useful insights that informed the team's understanding of the more systematically collected data, but because the participants were not necessarily representative of their peers, caveats accompany the few focus-group comments referenced in this report.

More complete data were gathered from novice school leaders in web-based surveys addressing perceptions and experiences related to preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. The surveys were administered in spring 2013 and spring 2014 to all first-, second-, and third-year principals and assistant principals in the six districts. In the 2013 wave of surveys, a total of 353 principals responded, for an overall response rate of 57 percent (Exhibit 3). Among assistant principals, we report results from five districts, where the overall response rate was 82 percent among assistant principals in 2013. (The New York response rate was 17 percent among assistant principals in 2013, and we have excluded those respondents from our analysis.) A total of 541 principals responded in 2014, for an overall response rate of 66 percent. Among assistant principals, a total of 671 responded, for an overall response rate of 73 percent.

Exhibit 3: Survey respondents and response rates, by district, 2013 and 2014

District	2013 principal survey		2013 assistant principal survey	
	Number of respondents	Response rate, in percent	Number of respondents	Response rate, in percent
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	43	96%	62	85%
Denver	56	78	91	81
Gwinnett County	39	93	112	85
Hillsborough County	55	90	47	75
New York City	102	31	N/A	N/A
Prince George's County	58	89	36	78
Total	353	57	348	82
District	2014 principal survey		2014 assistant principal survey	
	Number of respondents	Response rate, in percent	Number of respondents	Response rate, in percent
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	52	96%	89	84%
Denver	68	83	91	84
Gwinnett County	47	100	146	90
Hillsborough County	42	89	97	82
New York City	269	51	208	54
Prince George's County	63	93	40	87
Total	541	66	671	73

Exhibit reads: In 2013, 43 principals completed the survey in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, comprising 96 percent of all first-, second-, and third-year principals surveyed in the district.

Note: 2013 NYC assistant principal data were not included in analyses due to a low response rate.

Data Analysis

For this study of initiative implementation across six districts, the district is the primary unit of analysis. Therefore, where this report presents overall survey findings from all districts, the analysis gives equal weight to each district. The raw survey responses, if compiled across districts, would over-represent New York City—which had the largest numbers of novice principals and assistant principals—and under-represent the other districts. Because of the significant cross-district differences in numbers of novice principals and assistant principals, we applied post-stratification weights so that each district would be equally represented in overall analyses. Accordingly, overall cross-district findings are presented as weighted data. For a complete explanation of the survey weights, see Appendix A.

In the analysis of survey data, due to the relatively low response rate from principals and assistant principals in New York City (51 and 54 percent, respectively in 2014), we tested for non-response bias to determine whether respondents were representative of all principals and assistant principals in the district. We used New York City’s progress reports submitted to The Wallace Foundation to determine whether there were significant differences between the percentages of survey respondents who reported having graduated from particular preparation programs versus the percentages of graduates of those programs reported in the more complete data from the district. Because three programs were overrepresented among survey respondents, additional analyses tested a sample of survey items for differences in responses from graduates of each of those programs versus graduates of all other programs. We found only a few significant differences among group means, and these few significant differences did not follow a clear pattern or cluster within a particular set of items. We therefore determined that within-district survey weights were not necessary for New York City.

Qualitative analysis was iterative. Interview transcripts and notes were coded by the evaluation team, using software for qualitative data analysis, according to key features and expectations of the Principal Pipeline Initiative. Multiple iterations of analysis identified and refined the specific themes, descriptions, and analyses presented in this report. Drafts were reviewed by the particular team members who visited the site for factual accuracy and revised as necessary. The districts’ progress reports to The Wallace Foundation were a supplementary source for detailed factual descriptions of policies enacted; similarly, their initial proposals were a source for facts about policies and practices in place before the initiative. Finally, project directors at the sites conducted a further fact-check prior to publication.

Future Evaluation Reporting

As the initiative and the evaluation continue, two additional reports on implementation and one on effects will assess the actions taken by districts and their partner institutions in this initiative. A special-focus implementation report in 2015 will analyze systems for evaluating principals’ performance. A 2016 report will assess overall implementation, identifying the structures and policies put in place, the results observed, and factors that have supported or impeded the sites’ progress in carrying out their plans. After the end of the sites’ grant period, in 2018, the final report from the evaluation will analyze the effects of “pipeline principals”—those prepared, selected, and supported in ways consistent with the initiative’s design—on important school outcomes, including growth in student achievement.

2. Looking at the Whole Leadership Pipeline

The six districts selected for the Principal Pipeline Initiative had already launched policies and programs in school leadership at the time of grant award, but under the initiative they have had further opportunities to deepen their strategic thinking. The districts have seized the responsibility—and opportunity—to reshape career pathways for aspiring and novice principals. Therefore, this chapter begins with an analysis of the problems in career advancement that districts wanted to solve when they embarked on the initiative, then provides descriptive data on entry into principal positions over the life of the initiative to date. The data currently available for these analyses begin to provide a glimpse of the potential of human-capital data systems to inform district planning, a theme to which later chapters of this report return. This chapter concludes with an analysis of district leaders' views on strategic management of their pipelines as of 2014.

Takeaways

1. District leaders sought to strengthen the caliber of new principals and candidates for principal positions.
2. Most novice principals spent time—several years, in some districts—as assistant principals.
3. Most principals also served in other school leadership positions such as teacher leader, department chair, curriculum specialist, literacy or math coach, and others.
4. Districts were reframing the expectations for specific positions that they knew their future principals were likely to hold, starting with the assistant principalship.

Strengthening the Caliber of Leaders

When the Principal Pipeline Initiative began, leaders in all of the districts reported that a central problem to be solved in school leadership was a haphazard pattern of career progression: individuals without notable leadership talents could acquire administrator certification, develop their networks, and win appointment to school leadership positions, while others with more potential might be overlooked or not even try to move up. Leaders in each district also said they had begun to address this problem on their own, but that the Principal Pipeline Initiative would accelerate their progress.

District leaders wanted to improve the rate of success and retention among new principals by cultivating and selecting strong candidates. The “bench,” district leaders said, was not as deep as it needed to be. For example, some explained in interviews that they did not always see more than one strong candidate for principal positions. The number of applicants for vacancies was a particular concern in Denver and New York City, where strong accountability systems had resulted in principal dismissals, thus creating vacancies to fill, and where some interviewees expressed the view that the risk of dismissal might be making the job unattractive to applicants. In Hillsborough County, a shortage of very strong applicants was accompanied by an oversupply of applicants with the formal qualifications for principalship, making it hard to find an applicant whose success as a principal was most likely. Interviewees in Gwinnett County harked back to the previous decade when rapid growth in student enrollment had left the district short of well-qualified princi-

pal applicants. Charlotte-Mecklenburg leaders described their recent investments in leader preparation programs and selection procedures, expressing optimism that they were beginning to address the problem.

Leaders in all of the districts hoped that the initiative would result in a larger number of strong applicants for principal positions and a higher success rate among novice principals. They saw participation in this initiative as a chance to impose greater—and smarter—managerial control over the process by which individuals attained jobs in school leadership. District leaders wanted to manage career paths much more intentionally.

Principal Hiring Rates

A starting point for understanding the issues around aspiring and novice principals is the most basic data on the number of principals hired for each school year from 2011-12 through 2013-14. (Since the number of schools remained fairly stable in these districts, the number of newly hired principals was roughly equal to the number of individuals leaving the principalship.) In general, these six districts replaced roughly 15 percent of their principal corps annually (Exhibit 4). Denver was an outlier, with a hiring rate that was considerably higher (26 percent) for 2011, but its rate fell to one similar to those of other districts over the following two years. Prince George’s County was an outlier in the other direction for 2013-14, appointing new principals at only a 7 percent rate.

Exhibit 4: New principals appointed, by district and school year, as a percentage of principal positions in the district

District name and total number of principal positions, 2013-14	New principals as a percentage of all principal positions		
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (160)	14%	12%	13%
Denver (182)	26	20	16
Gwinnett County (132)	14	13	12
Hillsborough County (254)	13	18	14
New York City (1,590)	12	13	13
Prince George’s County (205)	16	18	7

Exhibit reads: Charlotte-Mecklenburg had 160 principals in 2013-14 and in 2011-12 appointed a number of new principals that was 14 percent of this total.

Source: Districts’ annual progress reports to The Wallace Foundation.

All the districts had a sense of their likely principal-replacement task at the start of the initiative, based on their recent experience, but their procedures for data tracking and projections varied. Gwinnett County made generally accurate projections based on factors such as historical experience, projected student enrollment, and the number of principals nearing retirement age. Hillsborough County had a considerable amount of data on each employee, including principals, and also worked to make accurate projections. In

Denver, where accountability pressures were especially intense and human-capital data systems less fully developed, district officials knew that a high replacement rate was likely but did not have specific projections. Over the course of the initiative, the foundation supported all districts’ investments in more systematic, data-informed procedures for succession planning. District leaders expressed enthusiasm about this change, which we discuss throughout this report.

Positions Held Before the Principalship

Most new principals in these districts had been assistant principals, as shown by the survey data collected for this evaluation. Overall, among first-, second-, and third-year principals responding to the survey in 2014, the percentage who had been assistant principals was 84 percent, weighted (Exhibit 5).¹ It was 87 percent, not significantly different, in the previous year. Across districts, the median number of years spent as an assistant principal was five years according to both the 2013 and 2014 surveys. In 2014 it was highest, six and a half years, in Hillsborough County (a district that required a lengthy apprenticeship for aspiring principals, as this report describes) and lowest, two years, in Denver (the district that was hiring principals at a rapid clip at the start of the initiative).

Exhibit 5: Principals who had served as assistant principals and those who had also served as teacher leaders, by district, 2014

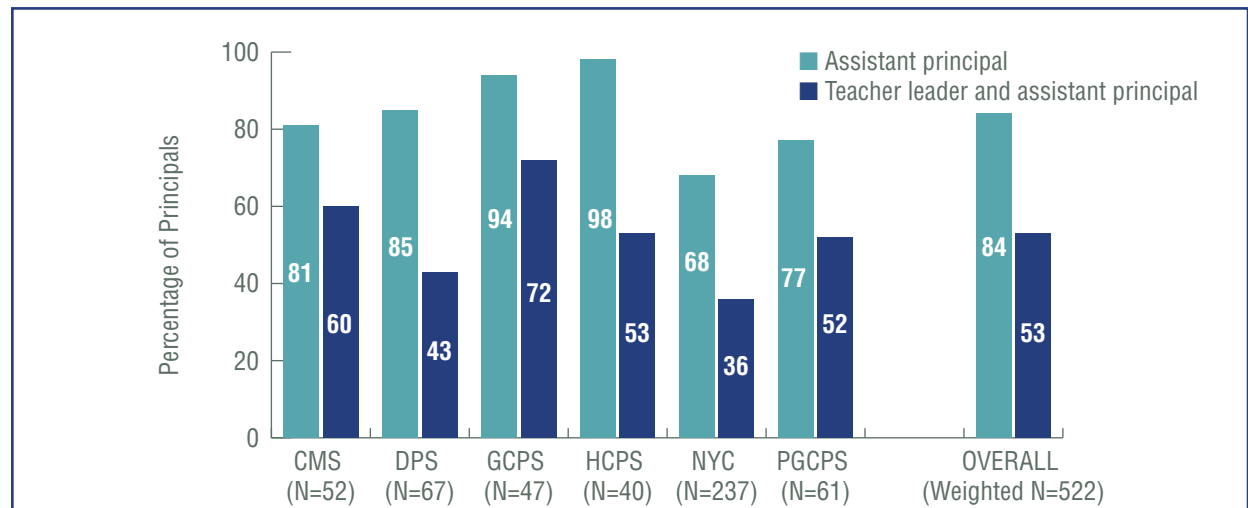


Exhibit reads: Eighty-one percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg responding to the survey in 2014 had served as an assistant principal, and 60 percent had served as both a teacher leader and an assistant principal.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014.

¹ As described in Chapter 1 and Appendix A, survey data drawn from all six districts are reported here as weighted frequencies, such that each district is equally represented in the overall number or percentage shown. District-specific results are reported unweighted.

Participants in our survey clearly recognized the learning opportunities that came with doing the job of an assistant principal. Among the principals who had served as assistant principals, 79 percent said that the experience contributed to their overall preparation for school leadership “to a great extent.”²

Beyond this widely shared experience as assistant principals, however, the novice principals reported a great range of leadership experiences. Among those who had served as assistant principals, most (89 percent) had held at least one other leadership position in a school as well. The pathways through school leadership positions varied a great deal, and there were some systematic differences by district. For example, in Gwinnett County it was customary for aspiring principals to serve as both teacher leaders and assistant principals; nearly three-quarters of the novice principals (72 percent) had done so (Exhibit 5). Only half as many principals in New York City (36 percent) had held both of these positions, however. (We use the term “teacher leaders” to describe the response that appeared in the survey as “grade level or subject area team leader/chairperson.”)

We explored the particular roles that principals had held because survey respondents reported that their prior experience in “multiple roles” had contributed to their preparation for the principalship. Among all responding principals, 63 percent reported that experience in multiple roles had contributed to their preparation “to a great extent,” and another 19 percent reported that it had done so “to a considerable extent.”

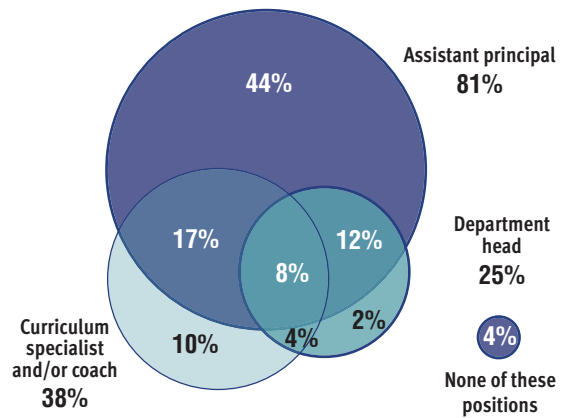
Novice principals’ prior leadership positions were different from district to district. There were cross-district differences, for example, in principals’ past experience in school leadership positions that might call for instructional leadership—potentially signaling differences in new principals’ opportunities to prepare as instructional leaders. We surveyed principals on their experience as department head, curriculum specialist or coordinator, or literacy or math coach. With the last two groups combined into those who had been a “curriculum specialist and/or coach,” Exhibit 6 illustrates the ways in which positions in department or curriculum leadership, respectively, had been part of the principal pathways in each district. In Hillsborough County, neither of these roles was reported by more than 18 percent of respondents. Instead, it was the job of assistant principal that had provided most of the experience in leadership for future principals. In New York City and Prince George’s County, however, both the role of department head and that of curriculum specialist or coach were substantial parts of the pathways to a principalship. In New York, curriculum positions were reported by just over half of novice principals (54 percent), and a subset of this group (17 percent of all the responding principals) had also been department heads. In Prince George’s County, 64 percent of principals had been department heads, 46 percent had held curriculum positions, and 28 percent had served in both of these roles. Only 15 percent of Prince George’s County principals had been assistant principals without also having been department heads or curriculum leaders.

The variation in pathways appears to reflect a combination of district policies and individual career trajectories. Gwinnett and Hillsborough Counties had a policy of drawing virtually all of their principals from the ranks of assistant principals. However, the extent to which aspiring leaders gained experience in other school leadership positions varied both within and across districts. No particular sequence of positions was

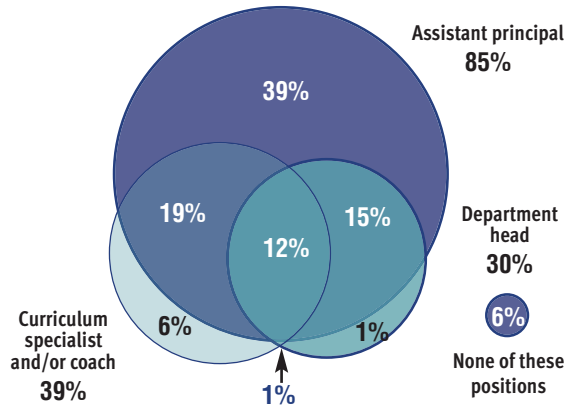
² This question did not have an exact counterpart in 2013. Throughout this report, 2014 results are reported alone where a question was newly added or revised in the 2014 version of the survey.

Exhibit 6: School leadership positions previously held by principals, by district, 2014

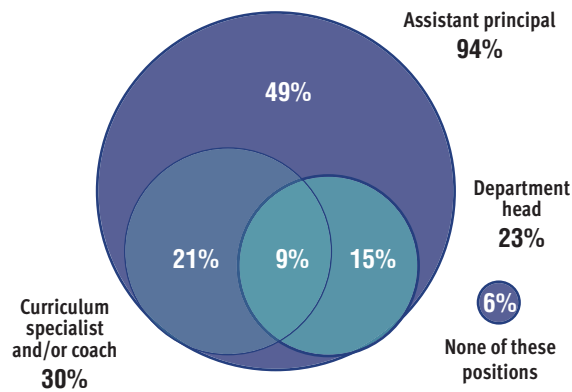
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N=52)



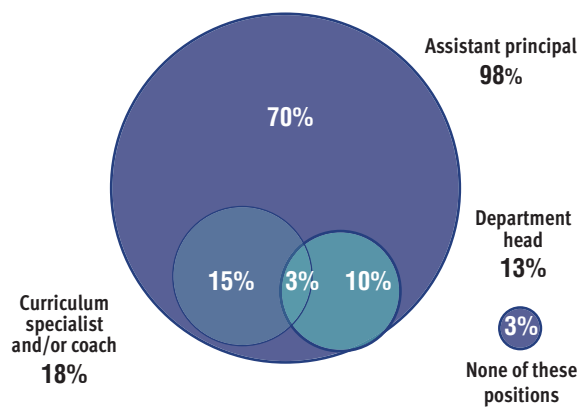
Denver (N=67)



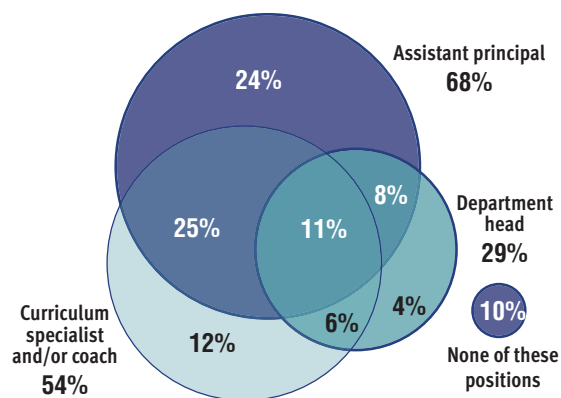
Gwinnett County (N=47)



Hillsborough County (N=40)



New York City (N=237)



Prince George's County (N=61)

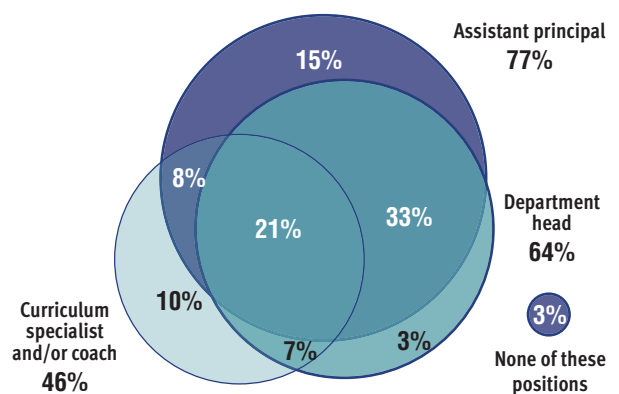


Exhibit reads: Eighty-one percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg had been an assistant principal, 38 percent a curriculum specialist and/or coach, and 25 percent a department head prior to becoming a principal. Forty-four percent of principals had been an assistant principal only, 10 percent a curriculum specialist and/or coach only, and 2 percent a department head only. Seventeen percent had been an assistant principal and curriculum specialist and/or coach, 12 percent an assistant principal and a department head, 4 percent a curriculum specialist and/or coach and a department head, and 8 percent had been all three. Four percent had held none of these positions.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2014.

prescribed; instead, individual aspiring principals found their way through a series of professional opportunities in which they could practice leadership skills.

Having developed a Leader Tracking System, each district will be able by early 2015 to view individual and aggregate data on these pathways to the principalship. Increasingly, district leaders will be able to identify common sequences and, if they so choose, to reshape the sequences through policies and programs. In addition, districts could redesign the leadership roles that are often stepping stones to a principalship in the district, ensuring that those roles offer experience and responsibility in critical areas like instructional leadership.

Building a Career Progression Strategically

Some district leaders volunteered a detailed picture of a leadership pathway in interviews that the evaluation team conducted in 2014. Two top leaders outlined in detail the stages of leadership opportunities and selection gates that they considered desirable. One spoke of an ideal progression into the principalship—one that did not yet exist in the district but that might be created through district policy:

The first part is robust outreach that cultivates leadership. It is a wide net and never overlooks talented people. Next is a very intentional pathway into positions that would lead to assistant principal, [such as] a teacher leadership position like department chair or staff development [position in which they] assess the needs of the school and think like a principal. So after three years, they are good assistant principals; the third stage is the assistant principalship. Fourth is specifically positions that lead to a principalship, an apprenticeship or internship we give you that accelerates you so you have experiences that get you prepared, trained, and ready. Next is the first principalship.

A top leader in a different district made similar comments, emphasizing selectivity in the steps through which that district had begun to move aspiring principals forward as of 2014:

We developed [standards for a] teacher leader, [identifying] what does excellence mean to the teacher leader. And partly that's a feedback tool that's very intentionally a selection tool to help our school leaders select good teacher leaders to get in the pipeline in the first place. So that's selection option number one. We then have selection opportunities for [university] programs to become an assistant principal.... In order to become assistant principal in the district you have to get into a pool, so there's a rigorous selection. Then as you go up there's selection, a very rigorous process to get into our principal residency program, so again, a nice selection tool. And then you have to get into the principal pool beyond that, and then there's a selection process [for principal placements].

Across all six districts, leaders spoke of both the opportunities and selection gates in place for aspiring leaders. As illustrated by the quotations above, some districts' leaders saw the assistant principalship as an expected part of the progression, a pivotal position from which the best performers could be selected for a final stage of preparation and then potentially qualify for selection as principals. This brought increasing recognition of some challenges, however, as we discuss next.

Challenges Related to Assistant Principalships

The challenge most visible to district leaders as they described career progressions as of 2014 was that of reframing the assistant principalship. They described their hopes, concerns, and possible policy options but had not finished developing specific plans for this reframing. Rather than letting principals shape the responsibilities of their assistant principals, district leaders wanted to use the assistant principalship strategically, as both apprenticeship and proving ground for future principals. Most of the assistant principals saw it this way as well: among first-, second-, and third-year assistant principals responding to our survey in 2014, a weighted total of 84 percent either planned to apply for principal positions (61 percent) or had already done so (23 percent). From both the central office and the assistant principal's office, then, there was interest in structuring the assistant principalship to offer better learning opportunities.

In all districts except Gwinnett County, however, district leaders expressed concern about the current assistant principals who had not shown high potential to meet the district's expectations as principals. This was a sensitive topic for district leaders to discuss in interviews. They recognized that many assistant principals were capably carrying out the kinds of noninstructional roles that in past decades were at the core of school leadership, such as student discipline and building management, and they were careful to communicate respect for the work those assistant principals were doing. District leaders were beginning to strategize about career opportunities other than principalships that might appeal to these assistant principals, such as central-office positions in student services or other departments. Such exit strategies for sitting assistant principals could free up positions for new assistant principals who would bring not only ambition but also skills in instructional leadership.

At least one leader in each of four districts³ expressed impatience with another group of assistant principals, those who were not performing well in their positions. One commented that principals were sometimes too reluctant to give their assistant principal a poor rating. "Hard conversations" were needed, this interviewee said. A top leader in another district also expressed frustration, saying:

We have assistant principals ... that are not keeping up with the changes. They're satisfied with where they are, and they're not adapting to the new instructional focus, ... haven't kept up with the educational changes that are taking place.

When they thought about pathways to leadership, then, district leaders were planning possible trajectories for the people who would become principals and also exit strategies from school leadership for those who probably would not. They recognized a need to open up assistant principal vacancies for strong candidates, who would otherwise grow frustrated with the lack of opportunities.

³ At the request of some of these interviewees, we do not name the districts here.

Summary: Changes under the Initiative, and a Look Ahead

As the Principal Pipeline Initiative matured over three years, districts were rapidly developing the capacity to take a strategic look at the flow of talent into the principalship. The increasing availability of data opened the way to more active management of career progressions for aspiring leaders, using approaches that we describe in the subsequent chapters of this report. In particular, the Leader Tracking Systems required and supported by the Principal Pipeline Initiative could inform this kind of active management.

Although not all districts had fully developed datasets with which they could analyze the pathways taken by their new principals, all district leaders were well aware that positions as assistant principals were part of the usual sequence. Their scrutiny of that position and their consideration of ways to raise the bar for assistant principal performance showed the strategic thinking that they were bringing to bear. Our survey data suggest that they could also look strategically at the responsibilities assigned to other leadership positions within schools, which may also provide important preparation for the principals who will take office some years in the future.

3. Standards for School Leaders

The Principal Pipeline Initiative called for developing standards for school leaders as an early step in implementation. The intention was that the standards would codify expectations for school leaders' capabilities and performance, and that they would shape leaders' preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. Over time, the districts' initial standards documents were supplemented with companion documents laying out desired principal competencies and, often, rubrics and evidence guides, as described below. Thus the work of building out and revising standards took place over multiple years. We analyze here the ways in which districts used standards to drive policy and program changes, and what the early results have been.

Standards Development

At the beginning of the initiative, two purposes of standards development stood out for district leaders. First, in all six districts, officials said that developing and using standards and competencies would lend coherence to the district's leadership policies and practices. In Hillsborough County, for example, leader standards were called "the driving force," and the development of standards was a matter of "putting first things first." District leaders in all sites intended to align job descriptions and hiring criteria, preparation curricula, leader evaluation, and ongoing support to their standards.

Second, interviewees in three districts in 2012 also spoke of standards in a way that emphasized the power of standards to communicate priorities for school leadership. In Gwinnett County, one district leader said "the standards have to be the centerpiece, ... a way of communicating what you want to achieve," while another said, when asked about standards and job descriptions, "We want all of us to speak the same language." Similarly, in New York, a leader said, "We needed to create consistency of language around leadership; the [previous] school leadership competencies were not used in any systemic way." Leaders in Prince George's County said in 2012 that they were pleased with the opportunity to align their policies on school leadership to a set of standards. They also expressed the sense that a "definition around leadership that's more clearly and concisely connected to all our work" was helping in communication.

The districts convened groups of varying composition to launch their standards development. They had two starting points in common: where the state had articulated standards, districts incorporated those standards into the process; districts also consulted the 2008 standards of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Commission (ISLLC), a consensus document of many professional associations that had greatly

Takeaways

1. Districts treated their standards documents as living documents.
2. Districts used the structure and language of standards and competencies to build preparation curricula, hiring criteria, and tools for principal evaluation and support.
3. Standards and competencies were important influences on professional development, hiring, and evaluation.
4. Standards and competencies were revised as needed improvements came to light in the process of using them.
5. Districts expected to continue adjusting their standards documents.

influenced state regulations nationwide. In most districts, as described below, principals were involved in the deliberations during 2011-12. District leaders explained in interviews that they expected principals' participation in standards development to bring both practicality and credibility to the standards documents.

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg had a prescribed set of standards and evaluation requirements from the state of North Carolina, but nevertheless formed a School Leadership Council including principals, assistant principals, principal supervisors, human resources staff, preservice partners, and the chief academic officer to focus on standards. This council worked during 2011-12 to identify key competencies for leadership practice aligned with a subset of the state standards, which it called “Super Standards,” reflecting the district’s needs and priorities.
- Denver developed its own leader standards, as it had done for its parallel document, the Framework for Effective Teaching. A small committee spent time in summer 2011 in a “very, very labor intensive” process of developing the first draft of what was later named the School Leadership Framework, reflecting state standards, tools and competencies emphasized in a partner preservice program, and standards drawn from national sources. The draft was then extensively vetted by district stakeholders.
- Gwinnett County already had job descriptions aligned to Georgia’s leadership standards, but the district also asked outside experts to review its standards.
- Hillsborough County developed and refined a lengthy set of School Leader Standards and Competencies in a process that engaged a 20-person committee of principals and assistant principals, then asked all principals and assistant principals to vet the resulting competencies. State standards were incorporated.
- New York convened a cross-division group to develop a vision for a career continuum of leadership competencies. The group set out to align the competencies to the Quality Review—the school observation and evaluation process that uses a rubric to assess how well the school is organized to support student achievement—as discussed in detail later in this chapter.
- Prince George’s County drafted a set of standards for vetting internally, by stakeholder groups that included the teachers’ and administrators’ unions, and externally, by the state department of education.

Four districts saw their initial standards documents as unwieldy, recognizing that more concise standards and competencies would be more understandable and more usable in district practice. Denver and Gwinnett County saw that the early versions of their documents were repetitive and needed to be pared down. Hillsborough County focused its attention on eight competencies, selected from a longer array that was initially developed. Charlotte-Mecklenburg updated its standards in 2014, renaming them the Competencies, Skills and Beliefs for School Leaders, around which they aligned district policies on preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. The changes have continued, as this chapter describes. One district’s recently revised standards are shown for illustrative purposes in the text box below.

An Illustration of School Leadership Standards

As of 2014, each of the six districts had from six to ten overarching principal standards. Most of the standards documents specified skills, elements, or indicators providing detail or operationalizing the overarching standards. To illustrate, we show Denver’s principal and assistant principal standards (called “expectations”) and indicators, as revised in 2013.

School Leadership Framework: Denver Public Schools

Expectation	Indicator
Culture and Equity Leadership	Leads for equity toward college and career readiness
	Leads for culture of empowerment, continuous improvement, and celebration
Instructional Leadership	Leads for high-quality, data-driven instruction by building the capacity of teachers to lead and perfect their craft
	Leads for the academic and social-emotional success of diverse student populations
	(ELA Program School Leaders): Leads for effective English Language Acquisition programming
Human Resource Leadership	Applies teacher and staff performance management systems in a way that ensures a culture of continuous improvement, support, and accountability
	Implements strong systems for identifying, recognizing, and distributing talent
Strategic Leadership	Leads the school’s vision, mission, and strategic goals to support college readiness for all students
	Distributes leadership to inspire change in support of an empowered school culture
Organizational Leadership	Strategically aligns people, time, and money to drive student achievement
Community Leadership	Actively advocates for members of the school community and effectively engages family and community

Using Standards in District Policy and Practice

After formulating their initial leader standards and competencies in 2011-12, the districts embarked on the longer process of aligning components of the pipeline to those documents. As districts revised or developed hiring systems, they were able to build from a foundation of newly adopted standards. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, for example, the identification of Super Standards was followed first by building an evaluation instrument and procedures designed to identify an individual leader’s strengths and weaknesses, then by refining the principal job description so that it reflected both the evaluation instrument and the standards, and then by repeatedly fine-tuning recruitment and selection processes to improve their alignment with the job description.

In Hillsborough County, a person closely involved with the ongoing use of standards and competencies described their centrality in the district's work with principals, assistant principals (APs), and aspiring leaders:

In year one I didn't realize how important they were. We developed them, but now when we're going into year three, the competencies drive everything we do. Every training we have, you're going to see the competencies slide at the beginning, what competencies are we focusing on, so it might be instructional expertise in that training, it might be achievement focus.... Every principal and AP has a learning plan, where they sat down with their supervisor and created goals based on our competencies. It's the language that is now being used across the district.

Hillsborough County formed an Alignment Committee composed of the same individuals, including principals and district-level staff, who had developed the original standards and competencies. The committee used the eight competencies as the lens for reviewing and modifying preparation programs and support at multiple career stages. The idea was to organize curricula for the sequence of two district-run preparation programs so that they would not be redundant with each other but would take participants "deeper and deeper" into the development of their competencies, as one district staff member put it. The committee also worked to align assessments with the competencies.

Indeed, the focus on standards and competencies reportedly helped Hillsborough County conceptualize many pipeline components, from preparation through evaluation, as a continuum in which the district could collect standards-based data on individuals and use the data for selection as well as support. With each aspiring principal's experiences and performance summarized in the Leader Tracking System, the aligned programs and assessments were expected to pay off in better choices of new principals. A district official explained:

Now when a candidate tries to get into our pool at the beginning, the Future Leader Academy [for aspiring assistant principals], they're assessed on those eight competencies. That information is in our electronic system, our Leader Tracking System. And then as they progress through the pipeline, you're going to continue to collect data about those eight competencies to where when you get to the end, you really would be able to say, "This person is one of the strongest we have when it comes to this competency," and so you would be able to make a better match, better hiring decisions.

Revising Standards and Competencies Based on Experience

Over the years, all the districts revisited their standards and competencies, adapting and revising them to meet the practical challenges encountered in leader preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. The refinement of leadership standards over time reflected lessons learned in the development of tools and materials for leader development and assessment or the refinement of standards for other role groups.

For example, in spring 2014 Charlotte-Mecklenburg overhauled its selection procedures for aspiring principals (as described in Chapter 5). A district official described the process of working with other district lead-

ers to figure out how candidates might demonstrate the skills and beliefs described in the district’s leader competencies:

We really worked with them on [questions like,] for belief in students, what does that mean? To what level do we expect our people to demonstrate that, to be successful as a first-year principal? And so that is when we really began the redesign work and came up with our new competencies, new rubrics.

Denver leaders, seeking to clarify the district’s key expectations for all educators, worked toward alignment among the standards documents they had developed for different positions in the schools and district office. The documents they reviewed in this process, called frameworks, included the district’s longstanding Framework for Effective Teaching and a new framework for central-office leaders, as well as the School Leadership Framework designed for principals and assistant principals. A district official described an example of useful new insights that came from the systematic comparison of the frameworks:

We wanted them to align across the district. Everybody's working on their own framework, and so we pulled a group together and we put all of our frameworks together and asked, where did they align and where did they not? And ours was pretty solid, the School Leadership Framework, except everybody else had this “personal leadership” and we didn’t. So that’s where I said, “Ha! There's our gap.”

New York City’s Approach to Principal Standards

New York City took a distinctive approach to the development and application of standards for principals. The School Leader Competencies that it put forth in 2012 were something of a placeholder, lightly adapted from an existing document that reportedly was not viewed as particularly useful. Meanwhile, though, an in-depth process had been launched with the aim of reframing the principal evaluation instrument to align closely with the Quality Review, which was a component (alongside student performance) of the district’s consequential evaluation system for schools.

The Quality Review incorporated rubrics and indicators for assessing each school’s instructional core, systems for improvement, and school culture. District leaders reasoned that the standards for principal evaluation should be organized around the qualities that the city expected to see in its schools. They set out, therefore, to map backward from the Quality Review Rubric to identify the principal competencies associated with each school-level indicator and to use the resulting standards for principal evaluation—and, at the same time, to align all Principal Pipeline Initiative components to the same standards.

Building acceptance for this approach across offices, with the state, and with the administrators’ union took time. By 2013, however, the new Principal Performance Review was in place, with indicators aligned to the Quality Review Rubric.

According to interviewees, the transition was a success. A principal supervisor praised the evaluation indicators that operationalized the principal standards, observing that they eased the work of evaluating and

supporting principals because they reflected “great information that you can capture in a school” and were “easy to talk about” with principals, who were already deeply familiar with the Quality Review. A district-run preparation program had a curriculum reorganized around the standards. A district official, pointing to the value of the alignment effort, offered a rapid-fire listing of its benefits that closely matched the way the entire pipeline initiative was supposed to work: the use of a single set of standards could clarify expectations for preparation programs, hiring, evaluation, and support; it would facilitate accountability and could contribute to shared understanding among multiple stakeholders. The comprehensiveness of this statement is striking:

I think that what's really been working is that we have now a single consistent set of standards that is used through the entire trajectory of a principal's development and then work as principal. So it's the same set of standards that we're using to select people for a principal preparation program, to evaluate their readiness to become a principal, and then to evaluate their work as a principal, as well as to drive the support that they're given in the principal role. I think that it's helpful in terms of making sure that hiring managers, central office, principals in the field, coaches, principal prep programs are all on the same page in terms of what it is that we expect of principals and what the standards are that we are going to hold them accountable for. I think that's really been great. Before we began this work, prep programs had their own sets of competencies and standards, and there were maybe different standards for evaluating people who were interested in becoming principals and then other standards for evaluating ones that were principals. It was a hodgepodge of different standards, and I think that we've managed to create a coherent understanding across a number of different stakeholders.

Standards for Assistant Principals

Interviewees in five districts reported that standards for assistant principals were the same as those for principals, but that a principal's level of proficiency or performance was not expected of assistant principals. “Those exact same competencies and beliefs are now being used with our APs, because we expect the same skills, competencies, and beliefs,” said a Charlotte-Mecklenburg official—but she then qualified the statement with, “Possibly to a different level for a first-year AP.” Similarly, a Denver interviewee said that the stated leader standards were the same for both roles, but added:

What was new this year is we developed an evidence guide to support the role of assistant principals.... So now we have one school leader framework, two evidence guides. It's the same framework, so the same standards for both jobs. But the evidence guides are differentiated, so what's “effective” at the AP level would look slightly different than what's “effective” at the principal level.

A Prince George's County official explained that the standards for assistant principals closely resembled those for principals but that the indicators were expressed in terms of “supporting” the principal in carrying out the functions that officially belonged to the principal. For example, an assistant principal would be expected to “support the principal in” areas such as the school budget.

In New York City, on the other hand, standards had not been built out for assistant principals in the same way that they had for principals. An interviewee commented on this fact, implying that it was an area ripe for future improvement:

An interesting thing in our system is that there's a very rigorous and well-defined set of standards and a process for evaluating both teachers and principals, but not so much for APs. The principals have to write up some kind of evaluation report at the end of the year and give them a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory."

Summary: Changes under the Initiative, and a Look Ahead

A mandate to develop standards would not necessarily lead to active, continuing use of the standards, but in this initiative that is what ensued. Rather than leave their standards and competencies entombed in binders on their shelves, these districts' leaders put them to active use in structuring principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support—as later chapters discuss in detail.

Although no district's leaders said in interviews that their standards needed a thorough overhaul, incremental revisions appeared very likely to continue. Future work on evaluation and support—the initiative component that was scheduled for completion in 2015—appeared particularly likely to spur further revisions in standards and competencies because new issues were likely to arise in the practical application of standards. Districts could potentially spend more time reviewing standards for assistant principals. New developments in the field of school leadership, such as the expected release of new ISLLC standards in early 2015, could also be expected to prompt further review of the districts' standards and competencies. On this note, a leader in Denver described the belief that any local standards document should be revisited on a regular cycle:

It's an iterative, dynamic document.... If we're constantly changing and improving in the field, if we assume that, then this document needs to be responsive to the standards that are changing for the roles.

4. Preservice Leader Preparation

The second major component of the Principal Pipeline Initiative design was a strong district role in shaping the preservice preparation of high-potential aspiring leaders. Districts embraced this aim in two major ways: by launching or expanding the programs that they themselves managed; and by seeking greater influence over external programs--those in nearby universities or nonprofit organizations--whose graduates they hired.

The initiative's theory of action featured the latter approach, with the expectation that districts' power as "consumers" of program graduates gave them the opportunity to change the local ecosystem of preparation programs, including the university programs that led to state administrator certification (Orr et al., 2010). As described in this chapter, the initiative provided funding and assistance for the use of Quality Measures, a facilitated process in which districts and "preferred provider" programs together assembled and reviewed data on each program's design and results so that programs in districts, universities, and other partner organizations could benefit from data-informed improvements. The initiative also encouraged districts to give formal preference in hiring to the graduates of the programs that district leaders deemed to be of high quality, thus creating a market-based incentive for programs to meet the district's expectations.

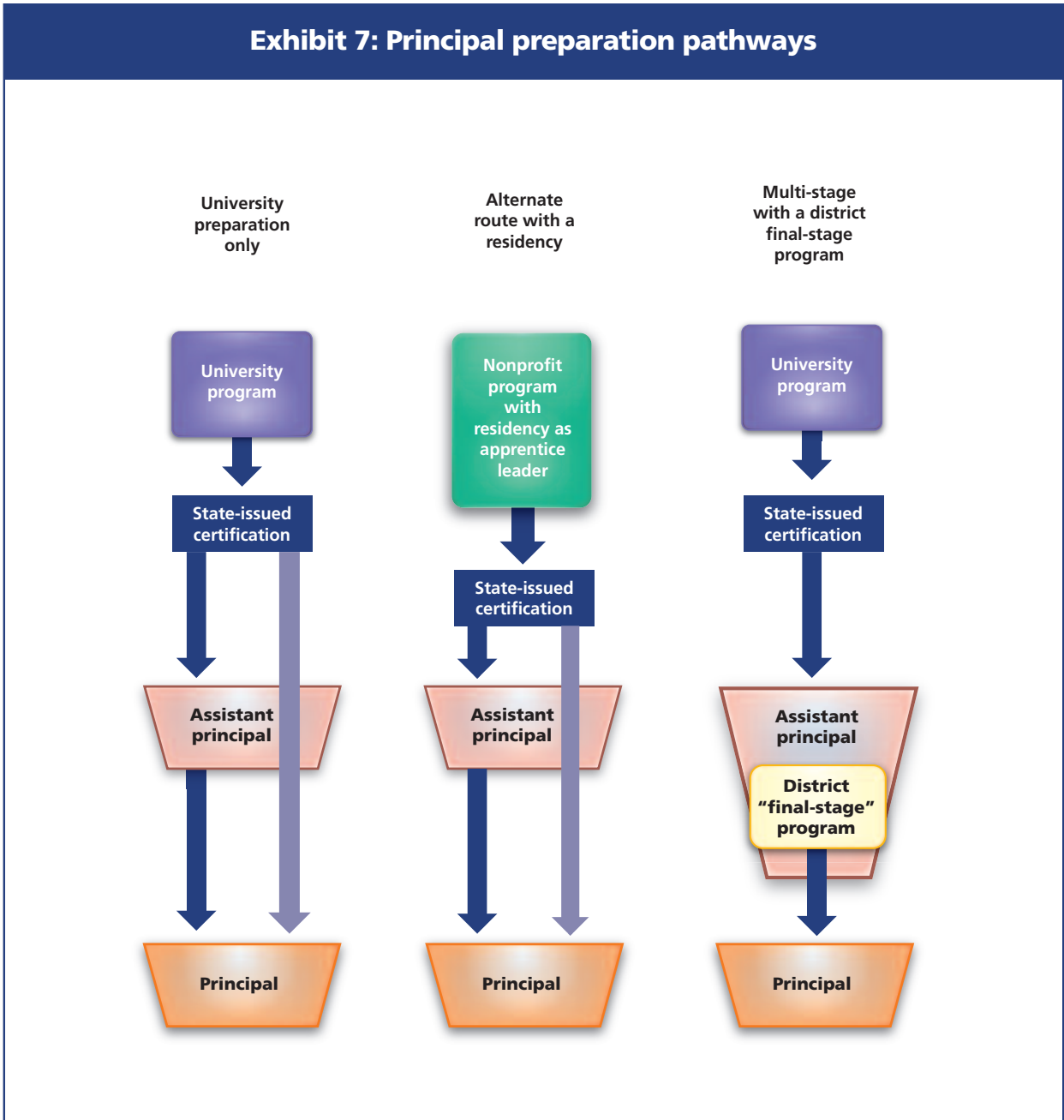
The evaluation team studied the districts' activities in leader preparation, analyzing the existing state of preservice preparation and the changes that took place under the initiative. This chapter analyzes the ways in which each district approached the opportunity to reshape preparation, the relationships forged with external partners, the experiences and preparation reported by novice principals, and preparation for assistant principals.

Revising the Process of Formal Preparation

Between 2011 and 2014, districts expanded and deepened the programming for aspiring principals. Each district had made choices about the preparation pathways that it would allow before the initiative began, and some made changes in requirements under the initiative. The pathways can be described as falling into three general types (Exhibit 7). Two states, Georgia and Florida, constrained the options by requiring university preparation for certification or licensure, while the other four states—Colorado, Maryland, New York, and North Carolina—had also approved alternate routes to principal certification.

Takeaways

1. Districts developed their own, district-run programs as part of the multi-year process of formal preparation.
2. Districts also formed partnerships with preparation programs outside the district. This included collecting and reviewing data on program features and outcomes.
3. The preparation programs serving these districts measured up reasonably well by the yardstick of past research on exemplary preparation programs, according to principal reports.



- In the first pathway, “*university preparation only*,” aspiring leaders paid university tuition (sometimes with a district subsidy) for a program in which they could participate while working full-time. The program qualified them for state certification as an administrator. Our data show that in practice most graduates went on to work as assistant principals before being tapped as principals.
- A different pathway was the “*alternate route with a residency*.” In selective nonprofit programs that worked in collaboration with a district, aspiring leaders received fellowship support to leave

their jobs and take a residency of a year or more as an apprentice leader, with on-the-job mentoring and group activities designed to develop school-leadership skills. At the end of the residency they were eligible for principalships. Actual placement rates as principals or assistant principals varied by program, district, and year.

- In a third pathway, “*multi-stage preparation with a district final-stage program*,” aspiring leaders first went through the university preparation required for initial administrator certification, then served as assistant principals. After two or three years in that position they could be selected for a district-run, tuition-free program as a final stage of preparation. In that program, while continuing to work as assistant principals in their existing school or “residents” in another school, they participated in classes and practical activities designed to inculcate the district’s philosophy and practice of school leadership. During or after that final program, most applied to become principals.

The third pathway, including participation in a district-run preparation program for principals, gained policy support across districts under the initiative (Exhibit 8). Gwinnett and Hillsborough Counties reaffirmed their commitment to the third pathway of multi-stage preparation. Both districts were committed to a vision in

Exhibit 8: Pathways as of 2011 and pathway changes made by 2014, by district		
District	2011	2014
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	University preparation or alternate route was required.	University partner programs had been added. Alternate route was being phased out.
Denver	University preparation or alternate route was required.	University partner programs had been added. A district final-stage program had been added but not required.
Gwinnett County	Multi-stage. A district final-stage program was required.	University partner programs and a district program for aspiring APs had been added. No change was made in requirements.
Hillsborough County	Multi-stage. A district final-stage program was usually required.	University partner programs and a district program for aspiring APs had been added. The district final-stage program was required in all cases.
New York City	All three pathways were available.	University, programs, alternate-route partner programs, and district programs had been added. No change was made in the types of pathways available.
Prince George’s County	University preparation or alternate route was required.	University partner programs had been added. A district final-stage program had been added but not required.

which the district itself took the lead in preparing its future principals, and both used some of their grant funds to enhance their existing final-stage programs in alignment with their principal standards. Gwinnett County lengthened and redesigned the clinical component of its final-stage Aspiring Principals Program. Hillsborough County overhauled its final-stage Preparing New Principals program for experienced assistant principals, increasing the number of on-the-job activities designed to build participants' skills and adding a mentoring component, and it strengthened the policy of selecting new principals from among graduates of this program. Both districts also forged partnerships with nearby university programs.

Denver and Prince George's County incorporated this third pathway into principal preparation. Each added a new, district-run program for sitting assistant principals whom the district identified as especially promising candidates for the principalship. While the new programs were not mandatory prerequisites for principal positions, the districts promoted them as a desirable step. Denver's Learn to Lead program, supported by the grant, provided a one-year residency at either the current school or a new school in which participants took on additional principal-like roles and developed their leadership skills and perspectives. Prince George's County's Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success, developed in partnership with the National Institute for School Leadership under the grant, provided a structured curriculum and trained mentors. Neither district took other preparation options off the table, however, and both broadened their partnerships with universities.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg and New York City broadened their portfolio of options. They continued to include university preparation and alternate routes as ways of qualifying to become a principal, rather than requiring or strongly encouraging an additional program. They also moved to strengthen district influence over recruitment and selection of candidates for preparation through all programs. Specifically, Charlotte-Mecklenburg supported new, specialized program options in two nearby universities in addition to the program that it had previously developed with a third university. New York City, using something of an "all-of-the-above" strategy, supported new or redesigned options in universities, expanded the options that the district itself offered at each stage of preparation, and worked with its nonprofit partners who were adding program options for aspiring leaders.

A Strong District Role in a Lengthy Preparation Process

As the districts worked to influence principal preparation, they were mindful of the many years that could elapse between starting preparation and becoming a principal. They had agreed to participate in an initiative that called for preparing substantial numbers of new principals in new ways by early 2015. It is not surprising that all six districts started by reshaping the last step in formal preparation, the one closest to appointment as a principal. As described below, five of them quickly developed or sought to strengthen in-house programs designed to prepare selected assistant principals for success as principals. It would take longer to have an effect on incoming principals by way of improving the university-based programs leading to initial certification.

Our survey data show the length of time that preparation could take. Across districts, survey respondents in 2014 (those who had started on the job between March 2011 and February 2014) reported a median of 78 months—six and a half years—from the beginning of their first leadership preparation program to their first

day on the job as a principal (Exhibit 9). The median was 60 months, or five years, for survey respondents in the previous year (a partially overlapping group who had started on the job between spring 2010 and spring 2013). The median length of time varied across districts. In 2014 it ranged from about three years in New York City to nine years in Hillsborough County. This meant that if Hillsborough County had been able to influence changes in all the university programs that prepared its future principals, starting immediately after grant award in 2011, the effects could potentially be seen in around half of new principals by 2020.

Exhibit 9: Median number of months between starting leadership preparation program and starting a job as principal by district, 2013 and 2014

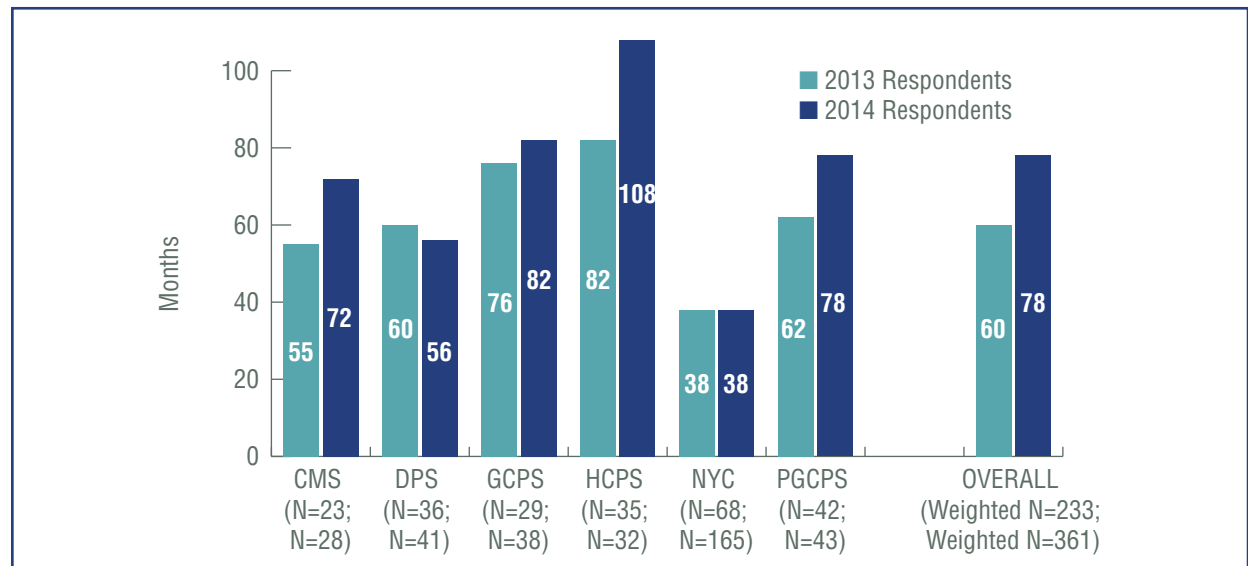


Exhibit reads: The median number of months between starting a leadership preparation program and starting a job as a principal was 55 months for the 23 first-, second-, and third-year principals responding in 2013 and 72 months for the 28 responding in 2014 in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013 and 2014.

For five districts, then, a key priority at the start of the initiative was a program for high-potential assistant principals that the district itself operated. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the sixth district, relied instead on expanding its formal agreements with local universities, supplementing its contractual partnership with the New Leaders alternate certification program. Having launched partner relationships before the initiative began, Charlotte-Mecklenburg was already seeing principal applicants prepared in the partner programs and could hope that the programs would supply a good proportion of new principals soon.

District-Run Programs

District leaders saw their own preparation programs as having some advantages over external programs:

- A selective admissions process gave the district a checkpoint for spotting high-potential leaders.
- District leaders who conducted class sessions had a chance to observe and size up the rising cohort of principal candidates.
- Program content could be tailored to the principalship routines and priorities of the district, immersing the aspiring leaders in those routines and priorities.

Seeing prospective principals repeatedly over the course of a district-run preparation program gave the district a strong head start in principal selection, according to interviewees. One Gwinnett County official succinctly observed of the district's preparation program: "It's a full-year interview." In districts with selective internal preparation programs, district hiring managers and others could get to know future candidates and see them engage in authentic leader responsibilities tied to leadership standards. The internal programs also provided an opportunity to counsel people out of the path to principalship or give them an opportunity to withdraw after gaining a better understanding of the job. Another Gwinnett County leader said of participants in that district's sequence of two preparation programs: "We get two shots at screening them before they get to be principals."

The districts could use their leader standards both in setting admissions criteria and in developing or refining program curricula. Hillsborough County's work on alignment, for example, included use of the district's eight key competencies in the criteria for admission to district-run preparation, and the alignment committee was hard at work in 2013-14 ensuring that at each stage of preparation the aspiring principals would have opportunities to develop those specific competencies. In New York City, the director of one of the district-run programs described recent changes made to align with the Quality Review Rubric, which is now the key standards document (as described in Chapter 3):

The general scope and sequence of the program has been adjusted to fit the department's priorities. This year, it was decided that we should align our content more closely to the Quality Review. ... Our faculty also participates in the PPO [Principal Practice Observation] visits, which are the principal rating visits. Our faculty know exactly what people are being rated on.... Literally, one of my people can walk out of a PPO, ... go right to class, and say, "This is what you're being required to do as a principal right now. This is what I'm seeing, and this is how you could do better."

Partnerships with Programs Outside the District

Expanding and deepening partnerships with principal-preparation programs outside the district was a key aim of the Principal Pipeline Initiative (Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2013). Two districts, Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, had formal partnerships with universities that had begun well before the Principal

Pipeline Initiative. Each program was tailored closely to district requirements. Denver Public Schools and the University of Denver created the Ritchie Program for School Leaders together in 2003, and the program was continuously co-designed and co-led by the district and university. Recruitment and admissions were carried out collaboratively; applicants' data were shared with the district; the program's project-based curriculum and the assessment of participants were aligned with the district's leader standards—for which one of the original sources had been the Ritchie curriculum.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg worked with Winthrop University to develop the two-year Leaders for Tomorrow program, which admitted its first class in 2008. A top district leader participated directly in selecting the students to be admitted each year. Interviewees in both the district and the university described the district as the “customer” for Leaders for Tomorrow. The district required that the program be aligned with the district's strategic plan, and the program director fine-tuned the curriculum and activities to align with new district priorities.

Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg used their existing university relationships as models for new start-up programs in universities:

- Denver expanded its partnership with the University of Denver to include an additional program for emerging leaders. And a new partner program at the University of Colorado-Denver was designed to focus on leadership that would effectively serve English learners.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg launched the School Executive Leadership Academy in partnership with two schools within Queens University, the business school and the education school. It also initiated a program at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, with three sub-programs of varying duration including a five-week summer intensive program designed to prepare principals for high schools.

New York City and Prince George's County worked with nearby universities to revamp or initiate preparation programs, using grant funds as part of the support for these efforts:

- As of 2013-14, new or revised programs for principal certification were operating in partnership with New York City at Bank Street College, Teachers College of Columbia University, Fordham University, and Relay Graduate School of Education.
- Bowie State University was partnering with Prince George's County in a program for principal preparation that had become more closely aligned with the district's priorities in school leadership. The district also initiated discussions with several other institutions, including the one that had the largest number of alumni working as school leaders in the district, McDaniel College.

Gwinnett County and Hillsborough County formalized their relationships with existing university programs for administrator certification. District officials met regularly with the program leaders in selected universities. They provided input that resulted in at least some curricular or programmatic change in university programs, and both districts provided the services of district staff as instructors or coaches in those programs.

Most relationships with nonprofit preparation programs also continued or grew through spring 2014. New Leaders continued to work in partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg, New York City, and Prince George's County for principal preparation. Its early-stage program for potential future principals, Emerging Leaders, was also operating in New York City. The New York City Leadership Academy continued to prepare principals for New York City and, under the Principal Pipeline Initiative, had begun a new, two-year program to prepare aspiring assistant principals who could join forces with principal candidates and apply as a jointly prepared leadership team for a school. The teams then received intensive coaching under other funding.

One program partnership was set for termination, however. As of spring 2014, Charlotte-Mecklenburg had chosen to end its contractual partnership with New Leaders for principal preparation for cost reasons. This was the only partnership nearing termination at this point in the initiative.

All districts were selective in choosing partners, assessing the likely benefit from the working relationship. The programs that districts partnered with met criteria such as: philosophical alignment with the district's beliefs about leadership competencies and how to develop them; willingness to engage in frequent communication; and openness to making program changes.

Quality Measures and the Use of Data

A vehicle for strengthening partnerships under the Principal Pipeline Initiative was use of the Quality Measures for Education Leadership Systems and Programs. Designed by Education Development Center with Wallace support, Quality Measures is a suite of tools that include indicators and rubrics for assessing leader preparation programs. It is organized around six program components that are associated with program effectiveness in leader preparation, drawing particularly on the work of Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007). The components are: course content and pedagogy; clinical practice; recruitment and selection; and three components related to graduate performance outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competencies; responsiveness to market demand; and impact on school, teacher, student performance).

The Principal Pipeline Initiative provided facilitators, training, and protocols for the Quality Measures work, which was intended to help districts and program leaders assess these program components in a data-based process. Leaders of programs in districts and partner organizations gathered evidence on the extent to which their programs met criteria in each of the components listed. At each site, program representatives then met together with district staff and Quality Measures facilitators to review each program's evidence and rate it on a rubric of indicators related to each component.

A total of 32 preparation programs operated by or partnering with the six districts had at least begun the process of Quality Measures as of August 2014. They included:

- Twenty-two university-based preservice programs, including five working with Gwinnett County, five with Hillsborough County, four with Charlotte-Mecklenburg, four with Prince George's County, three with Denver, and one with New York City.

- Six district-run programs, including two from New York City and one each from Denver, Gwinnett County, Hillsborough County, and Prince George’s County.
- Two of the New Leaders alternate-route programs: one from New York City and one from Prince George’s County.
- Two alternate-route programs developed and led by other organizations: one that worked with Denver and one that worked with New York City.

Across all programs that had completed the full review process, Education Development Center reported that the evidence related to course content and pedagogy was most often rated “well developed” or “developed.” The evidence related to graduate program outcomes was much weaker, generally falling in one of the two lowest rating categories. The review teams recommended that districts and providers develop or improve tracking systems to determine graduates’ employment status, to support principals during induction, and to “collect relevant longitudinal data” (Education Development Center, 2014, p. 11).

In assessing the effects of the Quality Measures process on both programs and partnerships, our interviewees pointed to the value of systematically reviewing and discussing program features and exchanging information. A typical positive comment was the following, from a leader of a university-based preservice program who compared the process favorably to traditional accreditation:

We happen to think our program is pretty good, but we learned so much in the three-day process with other teams. We immediately started making refinements [to our program]. It was a really informative process. The protocols are so helpful in way that is different from the accreditation reviews.

Interviewees also commented that the collaborative work on the Quality Measures process strengthened working relationships between districts and external programs. Together with the recommendations for tracking systems, this built receptivity among partner programs for continuing feedback about their operations and their graduates’ performance.

The districts’ Leader Tracking Systems, when populated with data spanning the entire career trajectories of leaders and potential leaders, will expand the possibilities for such feedback. One of many anticipated capabilities of the systems is the ability to tie an individual’s principal preparation experiences to data such as evaluation ratings and school performance. Over time, district leaders recognized, analysis and communication of such findings could inform program improvement and contribute to program accountability. This use of the system had not begun as of 2014, however.

Sources of Districts' Power in Relation to Preparation Programs

A particularly influential study in the design of the Principal Pipeline Initiative was that of Orr and colleagues (2010), who classified districts' relationships with preservice preparation as reflecting the stance of a competitor, customer, or collaborator. Under the initiative, we found that all of the districts wielded the power of "customers" while also "collaborating" with partner institutions and organizations. All districts behaved as customers with partners and potential partners, for example by establishing leader standards that the district would look for in program graduates. Each district also followed the initiative design by identifying a set of preferred providers, or programs that it believed were most aligned with district interests, and collaborating with them at least to some degree. The new and stronger relationships with external programs show that all six districts were willing to act as "discerning customers" and as "collaborators," in Orr's terms.

A "competitor" stance could be seen, however, in five districts' support of their own, district-run preparation programs. Some district-run preparation options were in fact direct competitors to external programs whose graduates qualified for certification. In 2013 Denver won state approval to grant administrator certification through its own alternative program. The district used that authority sparingly over the first year, to accommodate individuals whose preparation had not fit the usual mold, but district leaders were considering options for future program design. Participants in one of New York City's district-run programs earned certification through an arrangement with Baruch College, but as a practical matter the program was run by the district more than by the college. It appeared possible that these districts and others would seek to enlarge their footprint as producers, rather than consumers, of aspiring leaders who held state certification.

The initiative design suggested that districts should exercise consumer power by giving formal preference in hiring to graduates of particular programs. This idea drew a mixed reception in the districts. Gwinnett and Hillsborough Counties did give strong preference to graduates of their district-run programs. Denver and Prince George's County arranged for graduates of their new district-run programs to enjoy some advantages in the application process of applying to principal positions. Arguably, though, a preference for graduates of a district's own program reflected its choice to be a producer of principals, more than a choice to wield power as a consumer.

For every district to some degree, the notion of giving preference to some external programs posed some concerns. According to one district leader, whose sentiments were also expressed by others, the lack of formal preference for partner programs in fact enhanced the district's power as a consumer that could effectively pressure these partners (here described as "pipeline programs") to improve:

We give no priority to [graduates of] our pipeline programs. They have to clear the same bar everybody else does. I don't know how we would justify it not being that way. I think it puts a good pressure on our pipeline programs to always be pushing themselves in terms of alignment to the district and preparing their candidates for our expectations.... So I think it's a good thing for the pipeline programs to know that they're not assured a free pass. That keeps you on your game and keeps you tightly connected to the district. ... They all get feedback from the district in terms of where there are gaps in their candidates.

Principals' Experience with Preparation

So far, this chapter has largely focused on the institutional relationships between districts and preparation programs. We now shift the perspective to that of individual participants. Our data offer two kinds of windows into the preparation experiences of the individuals who became principals in these districts. First, we use the survey findings to take a retrospective look at novice principals' description and assessment of their preparation. Second, we describe how the districts gave preparation opportunities to their aspiring principals.

Principals' Perceptions of Their Preparation Experiences

Survey data give a picture of the preparation of four entering cohorts of principals—preparation that largely took place before the Principal Pipeline Initiative. Our questions asked for reflection on “the totality” of the respondent’s preservice preparation, not specific programs or types of programs. Survey respondents were reflecting in part on the programs in which they participated in the last year or two before taking the principal job, but also on programs in which they participated many years earlier (recalling that the median time span between the start of preparation and the start of a principalship was 60 months across all districts among the 2013 respondents, 78 months among the 2014 respondents). Our principal survey respondents of 2013 became principals in 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13; the survey respondents of spring 2014 became principals in 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. The cohorts who became principals in the two earliest years had completed their preservice preparation when the grant was awarded. The cohorts who became principals in the next two school years might have had the last year of their preparation after the grant award. However, a typical starting time for all respondents’ preparation would likely have been in the 2000s.

Survey responses indicated that preparation experiences predating and immediately following the grant award already showed many of the preparation-program features that the initiative called for (Exhibit 10). These features included a focus on instructional leadership, field-based activities, and a cohort group of peers. These data suggest that the districts were already hiring principals who had benefited from high-quality preparation programs as defined in prior research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), consistent with the foundation’s intention to select grantee districts that were already carrying out some components of the initiative. No statistically significant differences were found in responses from 2013 to 2014. This is not surprising, since the groups of respondents overlap substantially.

Exhibit 10: Principal perceptions of their preparation experiences, 2013 and 2014

To what extent were the following true of your formal leadership preparation training?	Percent of principals saying to a considerable or great extent	
	2013 (N=326)	2014 (N=472)
a. Program content emphasized leadership for school improvement	82%	87%
b. Program content emphasized instructional leadership	81	88
c. My interactions with peers have had a positive influence on my personal growth	80	85
d. Program gave me a strong orientation to the principalship as a career	77	80
e. I had coursework that included analysis and discussion of case studies	76	82
f. I had coursework that included analysis and discussion of field-based problems/problem-based learning approaches	74	81
g. I had coursework that included a portfolio demonstrating learning and accomplishments	72	73
h. I have developed close personal relationships with other leadership students	69	78
i. I had coursework that included field-based projects in which I applied ideas in the field	67	74
j. I had coursework that included completion of a capstone or culminating project	64	73
k. I had coursework that included action research or inquiry projects	63	71
l. Program content was tailored to district context	60	64

Exhibit reads: In 2013, 82 percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their preparation program emphasized leadership for school improvement to a considerable or great extent. In 2014, 87 percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their preparation program emphasized leadership for school improvement to a considerable or great extent.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2013 and 2014.

Principals gave generally positive assessments of the results of their preparation, from the vantage point of their subsequent experience as novice principals (Exhibit 11). Among the 2014 respondents, for example, 87 percent said that their programs had prepared them well or very well to engage in continuous learning; 83 percent said the programs had prepared them to create a collaborative learning organization. They also reported that they had been prepared well or very well to evaluate teachers and provide feedback (82 percent), engage staff in decision making (82 percent), lead school change (82 percent), plan comprehensively for school improvement (80 percent), and use data (79 percent). Responses in the previous year were statistically similar. It should be noted, however, that all self-reports in response to these questions presumably reflect some upward bias.

Exhibit 11: Principal perceptions of their preparedness, 2013 and 2014

How effectively did your leadership preparation training prepare you to do each of the following?	Percent of principals saying well or very well	
	2013 (N=326)	2014 (N=476)
a. Engage in self-improvement and continuous learning	88%	87%
b. Create a collaborative learning organization	82	83
c. Use data to monitor school progress, identify problems and propose solutions	78	79
d. Engage staff in a decision making process about school curriculum and policies	77	82
e. Evaluate teachers and provide instructional feedback to support their improvement	76	82
f. Lead a well-informed, planned change process for a school	76	82
g. Engage in comprehensive planning for school improvement	76	80
h. Create a coherent educational program across the school	72	76
i. Redesign school organizations to enhance productive teaching and learning	72	72
j. Design professional development that builds teachers' knowledge and skills	65	70
k. Understand how different students learn and how to teach them successfully	59	61
l. Evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness in supporting learning	50	55

Exhibit reads: In 2013, 88 percent of first, second, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their preparation programs prepared them well or very well to engage in self-improvement and continuous learning. In 2014, 87 percent of first, second, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their preparation programs prepared them well or very well to engage in self-improvement and continuous learning.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2013 and 2014.

Research on preparation programs—especially the work of Linda Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007)—helped dictate the program features that the Principal Pipeline Initiative called for. Our principal survey allows an exploratory comparison of principals' reports on their preparation with those of the Darling-Hammond team's two groups of respondents: graduates of the programs highlighted as exemplars, and a national comparison group of principals.

These districts appeared to enjoy the benefit of relatively strong preparation programs. The strength of preparation at the start of this initiative and shortly after is suggested by the similarity between the survey responses of novice principals in these districts and those of graduates of the exemplary programs studied by Darling-Hammond and colleagues. Further, the survey responses found in this study were more favorable in some respects than the responses among that study's national sample. This held true for these graduates' assessments of program content and instructional approaches and their self-reported preparation for specific aspects of leadership. The detailed comparative findings appear in Appendix B.

In interpreting these findings, it is important to consider that the program features identified as unusual strengths in the middle of the past decade may have become more widespread everywhere, not just among the programs preparing principals for these districts. Because these survey instruments have not been used to gather nationally representative data on leader preparation in recent years, we cannot know how the programs serving these districts would compare with others nationally.

How Districts Worked with Aspiring Principals

Selection into a district program of principal preparation often meant that the individual selected had a good chance of becoming a principal. Interviewees in three districts described their programs in similar terms:

Hillsborough is different from many other districts in the sense that selection into even [assistant-principal preparation] and certainly [principal preparation] is a pretty straight line to a hiring process.

We've found quickly that [those entering Denver's program] needed to be, at best, six months away [from being principal-ready], because we start interviewing and selecting for principal jobs virtually in January.... So we've changed our language in that it's not a principal preparation program, but more of a "transition into the principalship" type of program.

You are clearly told that when you turn in application for [Gwinnett's program], you're signaling that you're ready to be a principal the next day.

These programs had rigorous selection processes that used performance tasks and interviews in selecting candidates, with ratings by groups of trained staff using instruments aligned with the leader standards. Prince George's County also used rigorous selection, requiring a video demonstrating on-the-job leadership, along with recommendations and a writing sample. The difference in Prince George's County was the context of limited available positions: very few new principals were being appointed, and graduates of the new preparation program faced stiff competition for those positions.

Another example of a close connection with the hiring process was in one district-run program in New York City, where participants were nominated by leaders of the sub-district units called clusters. Each cluster nominated approximately 20 individuals seen as highly promising candidates to assume principalships within several years. An interviewee who worked with the program said:

Given that our goal is to provide a pipeline of leadership for each cluster, if a cluster's going to endorse someone, that means a lot.

The districts' own preparation programs were used as a way to get to know each participant's strengths and potential. Ongoing participant assessments aligned with leader standards—standards that also shaped the principal job descriptions and hiring criteria—contributed to the sense that these programs offered a strong position for future hiring.

Another way in which all six districts worked with aspiring leaders was to provide them with structured information about preparation opportunities and planning their career paths. In New York City, the diversity of school opportunities and preparation programs presented a large-scale challenge in helping each aspiring leader find the right pathway. This was described as an issue in 2012. The district then developed a page on its website with capsule descriptions of all the partner preparation programs and links to their websites, and that page became the second-most widely viewed page on the district's site. But providing enough information to aspiring leaders was still seen as an issue in 2014, when a district official said:

I think it's actually sort of confusing to people in the field because it's hard for them to differentiate which program is really right for me. I think that it would be smart for us to really try and get clearer about which programs are best for who.... I don't think we have been as clear as we can be about which programs are best suited for different career aspirations.

Pointing to the wide range of aspiring principals' situations and purposes, this official elaborated on the challenge of helping to clarify:

...which programs are really best if you're a teacher who needs her certification and wants to become an AP versus which program is really designed for a more seasoned educator who's serious about becoming a principal right away, and even within that, which program is best for somebody who wants to go in and turn around a struggling school versus somebody who sees themselves as taking over the school that they've been working in for ten years.

Preparation for Assistant Principals

Districts varied in the extent to which they had crafted programs for assistant principals, either to prepare aspiring assistant principals or to support novice assistant principals on the job. (The latter type of program is discussed in Chapter 6 of this report.) In most districts, university programs leading to initial administrator certification constituted the formal preparation that assistant principals received. However, the two districts with the most tightly prescribed pathways to the principalship launched similar pathways to the assistant principalship early in the initiative. Gwinnett County instituted a more rigorous selection process for the Aspiring Leader Program that it offered to would-be assistant principals. Hillsborough County started up a selective Future Leaders Academy for individuals who had their initial administrative certification (based on their university preparation) and hoped to become assistant principals. Each of these districts also provided structured mentoring for its new assistant principals, and Hillsborough County was considering adding more mentors in order to shrink their caseloads. Charlotte-Mecklenburg also had an induction program for novice assistant principals.

Summary: Changes under the Initiative, and a Look Ahead

For district decision makers, although a consumer approach offered potential improvement in their principal corps over the long term, the direct approach of preparing their own new principals also held appeal. Thus, the launch or expansion of district-run preparation programs was a feature of early implementation in five districts (all but Charlotte-Mecklenburg).

With preparation in universities, alternate-route programs, and district offerings, the principals newly hired in the years from 2011 through early 2014 reported that they were well prepared for their responsibilities in such key areas as instructional leadership. Their responses also suggested that cohort models, problem-based learning, and clinical experience were widespread across preparation programs that served these districts before the grant award, although tailoring of content to the district was less so. Overall, their survey responses did not differ greatly from those of graduates of exemplar programs surveyed by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007).

Districts were creating ways to follow the progress of principal aspirants and novice principals through preparation and beginning practice, gathering data from their own and partner programs and also working more intensively with aspirants. Internal gatekeeper programs gave district and school leaders first-hand knowledge of individuals who might soon be in the hiring pool. As the districts worked with partners on preparation and novice support, they could track individuals' progress, and new data-tracking systems will improve their ability to do so. This information can potentially continue to inform redesign and fine-tuning of leader preparation in these sites—but also is of use in a process that is even more salient to district leaders, that of hiring school leaders. We discuss that process next.

5. Selective Hiring and Placement

District leaders saw tremendous potential benefit in reshaping the procedures and criteria that they used in hiring principals. Under the grant, they sought to lay groundwork for the actual hiring of principals through earlier selection stages that winnowed aspiring school leaders, and through the compilation of data on these aspirants' experience and performance. The districts also worked to use available data in succession planning as well as principal selection.

District leaders expressed hope that a systematic set of steps for aspiring principals' advancement could ensure stronger rosters of candidates available for hiring as principals. Under the grant, every district introduced one or more new occasions for a standards-based assessment of aspiring principals. In New York, new assessments provided information; in the other districts, they not only provided information but also opened or closed doors to advancement.

Takeaways

1. Districts saw value in adding new stages of assessment and selection for aspiring leaders, including the use of talent pools.
2. Standards-based rubrics, interview protocols, and performance tasks offered more systematic ways to assess candidate skills.
3. Succession planning and placement discussions engaged top-level district leaders.
4. Leader Tracking Systems showed promise of organizing the data on experience and performance into accessible candidate profiles for use in placement decisions.

Multi-Stage Selection and Talent Pools

For these districts, restructuring the avenues to positions in school leadership was not solely a matter of improving preservice preparation. The restructuring included changes that were closely related to hiring: building talent pools of aspiring leaders, rigorously vetted, whom the district considered ready to advance in the hiring process. Before grant award, four of the districts (Denver, Hillsborough County, New York City, and Prince George's County) essentially accepted applications for open principal positions from anyone holding the state-required certification. There were some barriers to entry in these districts—Hillsborough strongly preferred candidates from within the district, especially graduates of its Preparing New Principals program; New York City had a “hiring pool” of license holders who had met a few additional requirements set by the state—but in general the procedure in these four districts was to post open positions and consider the applications that came in.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Gwinnett County had a different approach before the grants were awarded: each had instituted a preliminary, district-run selection stage for aspiring leaders who wanted to be considered for specific positions. Gwinnett required that aspiring principals participate in its selective Quality-Plus Leader Academy before winning principal jobs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg had created “talent pools” for

would-be principals and APs, with selection procedures for entry, and expected to fill all open leadership positions from among the candidates who had cleared the bar for entry into these pools.

By 2014, all districts had selection stages and processes of assessment that were prerequisites for a principalship application from inside or outside the district. The other four districts joined Gwinnett and Charlotte-Mecklenburg in having pre-application selection processes:

- In Hillsborough, completion of Preparing New Principals quickly became a more tightly enforced requirement for principal candidates, and for future cohorts, entry into that program would also have to be preceded by completion of the new Future Leaders Academy, which also had a selective admissions process.
- Denver and Prince George's County instituted selective pools for aspiring principals.
- New York State tightened its entry requirements for the hiring pool, and New York City introduced a new set of assessments for candidates who qualified for that pool. While no candidate was disqualified on the basis of performance on these district assessments, the scores became part of the individual records provided to hiring managers.

Gwinnett County also made changes. Like Hillsborough County, it added a selective program to prepare assistant principals, and the data gathered at that stage became part of each aspiring leader's dossier.

Selection into a talent pool as a prerequisite for consideration in hiring promised to streamline the filling of principal vacancies by limiting the number of applications to be considered at the time that each vacancy arose. This was a priority, as seen in the comments of district staff who either complained about a deluge of applications for each open position or expressed relief that the tide had been stemmed. District managers in Prince George's County cited their vivid memories of the numbers: "We put out a principal posting and over eight hundred applied," said one.

A Denver principal supervisor summed up the benefits of instituting a talent pool in this way in 2014:

Looking at the principal pool, we have had several changes and have finally gotten to giving us better options for principal candidates. The screening process for candidates to enter into a pool has greatly increased the level of expertise and quality of principals. Doing all the pre-work up front has led to higher-level candidates.

Issues in Pool Selection

Although the potential advantages of talent pools were evident, filling a pool with the right number and types of candidates has not been simple. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's experience is instructive. Having set up talent pools in 2011, the district repeatedly modified the procedures and criteria used for selection as criticisms arose. One key issue was the sheer size of the pool: the pool was seen at some times and from some

perspectives as too small, but at other times and from other perspectives as too large and unselective. As of 2012, for example, district leaders felt the pool was short on appropriate candidates who could lead high schools or establish good community relationships in one part or another of this demographically diverse district. Principals asked why the candidates they recommended were not accepted into the pool. In response to these concerns, the process was revised and criteria relaxed in order both to yield a larger pool and to accommodate principals' recommendations. In the following year, though, selectivity again ramped up because the pool was seen to be producing marginally qualified candidates for vacancies. In short, changes were made because the consequences of particular design choices emerged over time. One interviewee emphasized the risk of discouraging aspiring leaders when either too few or too many were entering the pool:

We've seen it ... go from a very high bar to a concern that good people were not getting into the pool. ... So what's that sweet spot in terms of the rigor of your selection process that isn't discouraging to those high-potential people that just still aren't clearing the bar to get into the principal pool? ... We open it up ... and we have a whole bunch of people sitting in a pool, some or many not very qualified, and they get discouraged because they never get interviews and they never get selected and they sit there.... So I don't know that we've found that sweet spot.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's experience over the years suggests that the districts that more recently introduced talent pools may also want to make design adjustments in the future. For example, as of 2014, Prince George's County continued to receive large numbers of applications from individuals in its pool. Although two interviewees commented that the abundant supply of qualified candidates was "a good problem to have," others candidly acknowledged that the need to review hundreds of applications could be evidence of flaws in the system. In no district did leaders say that they had found the right level of selectivity for their pool.

More Ways to Assess Candidates' Skills

In 2011, Gwinnett County stood out among the grantees for the relatively elaborate performance-assessment procedures it used in assessing aspiring leaders. With simulations that included several role-play interactions, in addition to the chance to observe potential principals during their participation in the Aspiring Principal Program of the district's Quality-Plus Leader Academy, the district approached its hiring decisions comfortable in the knowledge that it had assembled a great deal of relevant data on each candidate.

Under the grant, all the other districts incorporated some form of performance assessment at one or more selection stages, and Gwinnett County continued to review and refine its procedures as well. Prince George's County moved quickly to revamp its hiring procedures, seeking a basis for hiring that would differ from the old-fashioned system widely described as "who you know." "We wanted to eliminate the old-boy network," said a district official in spring 2012. Recommendations and "popularity" were outweighed by new measures that offered promise of greater objectivity and precision. Prince George's County used its initial leader standards to reshape its candidate assessments in 2011-12. A district official explained in 2012:

People must demonstrate that they have the ability to carry out standards—they conduct an observation, they analyze data, they create a vision statement. All these things are a part of the work that has emerged from the standards.

The other four districts (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Denver, Hillsborough County, and New York City) developed new assessments for aspiring leaders at least two years after grant award, a process that helped shape the refinement and elaboration of leader standards. As described in Chapter 3, the standards themselves set an overarching framework within which each district built out more detailed statements of principal competencies and, increasingly, specified the evidence that would reveal each competency. Here we discuss the assessments used at any stage of the hiring process, including selection into a talent pool as well as any later stage in which candidates participated in a further assessment for specific positions.

The increased use of practical demonstrations in the hiring process was apparent in survey respondents' reports. Among the two cohorts of principals who started on the job in 2010-11 and 2011-12, practical demonstrations had been part of the application experience (in applying for a talent pool or for a principal position) for 31 percent, across districts. The rate of practical demonstrations rose to 50 percent for the two later cohorts, those who started on the job in 2012-13 and 2013-14. This was the selection procedure that showed the greatest increase over time.⁴

In overhauling their assessment procedures for aspiring leaders, then, these districts looked for practical ways to gather evidence aligned with their leader standards. Three of them (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Denver, and Hillsborough County) enlisted consulting help in this process, turning to Cross & Joftus for assistance in structuring their assessments and training the people who would rate candidates. In each of the three districts with which they worked, the consultants based the assessments on the district's own evolving definitions of the standards and competencies it sought in leaders. District staff did the same in New York City when the new Principal Review rubric was completed and official in 2013-14.

Assessment procedures in all districts as of 2014 included practical demonstrations, typically with simulated scenarios. Several assessments would occur over a day or more. Activities could include:

- **Role play:** the candidate takes the role of principal responding to a difficult semi-scripted scenario, such as addressing an angry parent or faculty member.
- **In-basket exercise:** the candidate prioritizes and addresses a set of tasks and messages that might arrive in an in-basket.
- **School data review:** the candidate receives a package of school data to analyze, discuss, and address in recommendations for data-informed improvement.
- **Teacher observation and feedback:** the candidate observes a video of teacher instruction and provides written or oral feedback to the teacher.

⁴ Our survey data do not specifically identify the time(s) when a particular respondent applied to a talent pool or applied for a principalship. We use the time of becoming a principal (i.e., the earliest two cohorts vs. the latest two cohorts) as a rough proxy for the time when groups of respondents experienced the hiring process.

In interviews, district officials expressed enthusiasm about the power of these new procedures to expose candidates' strengths and weaknesses. A Charlotte-Mecklenburg interviewee involved in the process said: "What we're doing now that we weren't doing [a few years ago] is the role play that brings to the surface a lot that we would not see in a normal interview, the back and forth exchange."

New York City's new process for individuals in the Principal Candidate Pool included performance tasks for each of three three-hour assessments that typically occurred over a six-week period. Applicants received one-page scenarios, and in response to each scenario they might be required to outline a plan, write a letter to stakeholders, or deliver a short oral presentation. The scenarios had been crafted to reveal whether candidate responses reflected the skills and behaviors that the district standards called for.

Candidates' performance in each district was rated by teams of trained raters, including principal supervisors, central office staff from various divisions (e.g., administration, human resources, curriculum and instruction), principals, and coaches or mentors. Raters used standard instruments, such as rubrics and evidence guides, based on the district's leader standards. Thus, not only did the standards provide a framework for designing an assessment instrument, but language from the standards documents appeared in the descriptions of evidence that would signal different levels of performance.

A Charlotte-Mecklenburg official pointed out that the current assessment procedures for the talent pool could generate useful feedback for candidates because of the alignment to standards. Moreover, the principal supervisors were being coached to give feedback in terms of the competencies that the candidate still needed to develop:

So we don't say, "You did poorly in the role play, and you need to learn in the role play to do blah-blah-blah." Because we're not coaching to the activity. We coach to the competency.

Issues of Staff Capacity for the Rating Process

Full results of the new hiring procedures will take some time to emerge, as new cohorts of school leaders emerge from the process and their on-the-job performance can be seen. At this early stage, interviewees reported that performance assessments appeared to provide a more authentic understanding of candidates' competencies. They observed, however, that the time demands on district staff reviewing and rating performance were substantial. The capacity issue here was not so much skill as the sheer amount of time that the ambitious new systems demanded. Carrying out performance assessments required substantial time on the part of raters and hiring managers, raising questions about sustainability. As the new systems started up, districts leaned on staff in ways that could lead to burnout or detract from other responsibilities.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, for example, several senior district staff members attended each talent-pool candidate's multi-hour session of performance assessments and interviews. If there are a hundred applicants over the next two years, the person-hours will add up. In New York City, a small and dedicated central-office staff and willing principals were rating the performance of principal applicants, and the strain associ-

ated with the time commitment was clear. As one participant in Charlotte-Mecklenburg put it, “It has been very time-consuming.... I’m not going to sugar-coat that. We’re going to see if all that time commitment is worth it.”

Applicants’ Perceptions of the Selection Process

As might be expected from individuals who had recently been hired, novice principals gave relatively positive responses to questions about the hiring process. Feedback to candidates was an area in which districts might be able to improve, however. The 2014 survey had a question about the process of application to a talent pool (or, in Gwinnett and Hillsborough Counties, application to the principal preparation programs that served the function of a talent pool). A parallel question asked about a process in which the respondent had applied for specific school vacancies (a process that did not take place in all cases, since districts might place candidates based on data they already had in hand, without requiring formal applications from the candidates they identified).

At each stage, more than 80 percent of the principals reported that they had had a good opportunity to show their skills and that standards and expectations were clearly communicated (Exhibits 12 and 13). About 60 percent reported having received useful feedback, with only about 20 percent strongly agreeing that the feedback had been useful at each stage.

Changes in procedures were creating some stresses for candidates. In focus groups with novice principals and aspiring principals in 2014, the effects of changing district policies and practices could be discerned in some participants’ frustration. They felt that the process lacked transparency; they were unsure of the rationale for the changes they had heard about or experienced; and some suspected that the process had underlying unfairness. This feeling was not universal, and the focus groups were not representative of all new principals or aspiring principals, but the comments signaled that a sense of anxiety and suspicion may arise when high-stakes procedures are undergoing rapid change, and they may point to a continuing need for the districts to provide ample information about their hiring policies.

Exhibit 12: Principal perceptions of their past experience as a candidate for a hiring pool or analogous program, 2014

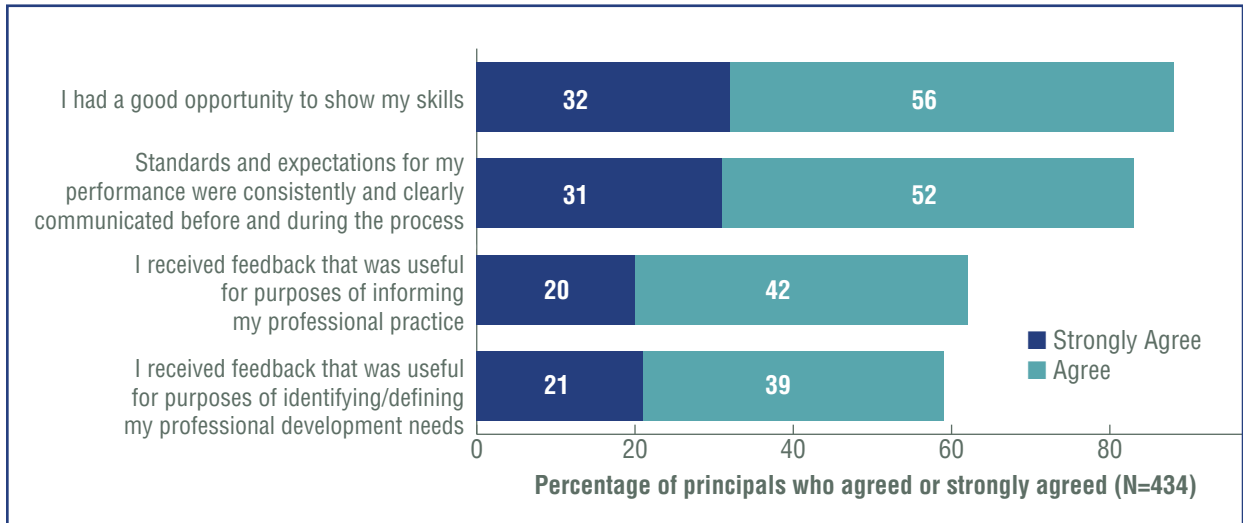


Exhibit reads: Thirty-two percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts strongly agreed and 56 percent agreed that they had a good opportunity to show their skills as a candidate for a hiring pool or analogous program.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014.

Exhibit 13: Principal perceptions of their past experience as a candidate for principal positions, 2014

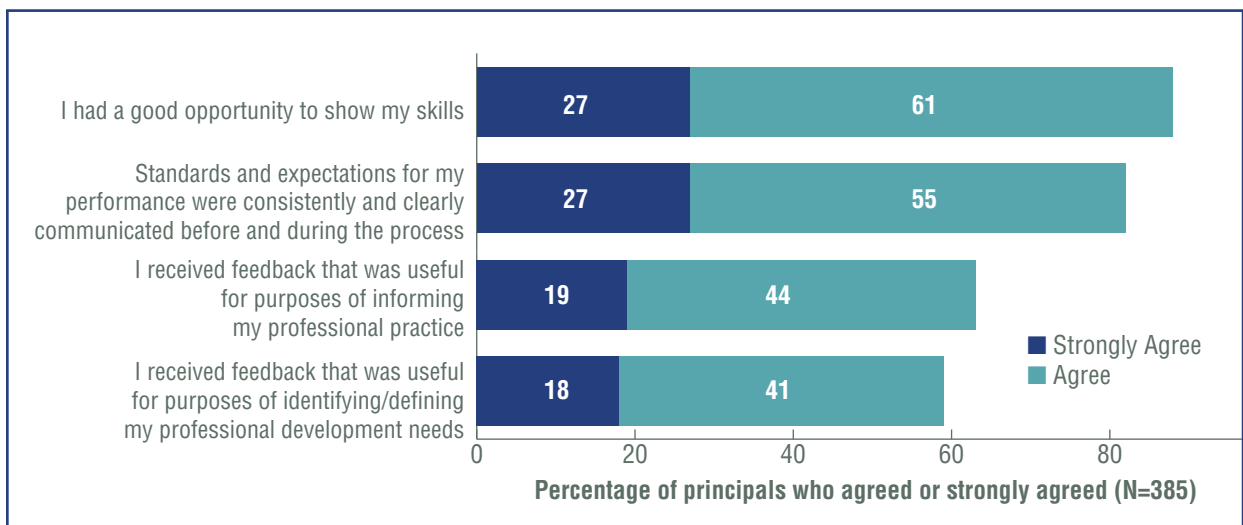


Exhibit reads: Twenty-seven percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts strongly agreed and 61 percent agreed that they had a good opportunity to show their skills as a candidate for principal positions.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014.

Succession Planning and Placement

The specific procedures for filling an existing or upcoming school vacancy were revised at least once in each of the participating districts, and no one ruled out further changes. Denver's changes, for example, illustrate a shift from a decentralized, ad hoc process to a more centralized one. In 2011-12, the process was in the hands of the principal supervisor. A principal supervisor for a group of schools took the lead in inviting applications for each vacant or soon-to-be-vacant principal position, identifying the specific criteria sought in that principal. Applications would then arrive from interested candidates who saw the job posting. As a principal supervisor described it in 2012, especially with reference to struggling schools, the effort was considerable and the results were often disappointing:

We get some support from [the human resources office], but typically we post the position, wait for candidates to apply, pull the applications. You'd hope for thirty or forty, but we [usually] get eight to fifteen applicants, and half of them don't meet the criteria. That's the biggest challenge: finding quality candidates that have done this work before.

Districtwide, too, there was dissatisfaction with the effort and the results. Time was spent in screening unqualified applicants; effort was duplicated in multiple, school-by-school selection processes; and it might become clear in retrospect that the candidate placed as principal for one school would have been a better fit for a different school that happened to post its vacancy later.

One change in Denver was the initiation of the principal pool in 2012-13. Another was a shift to longer-range succession planning at the top levels of the district in 2013-14. By spring 2014, district interviewees could describe how those two processes intersected for a more orderly and better informed process than had been possible in earlier years. In the fall, top leaders and the principal supervisors conferred to begin projecting an overall number of vacancies and identifying specific vacancies that might be anticipated based on what the principal supervisor knew about principals' plans. They also discussed assistant principals and others who might be encouraged to seek leadership roles or further preparation. For the principal pool, a rolling process of application review had resulted in 54 candidates selected into the pool by mid-April. As vacancies occurred, some were quickly filled from the pool. Looking ahead in April, interviewees were generally confident that they had a good range of candidates ready for vacancies likely to arise later.

Hillsborough County was moving in 2013-14 toward a system of succession planning as well. In two meetings so far, overall projections and specific likely vacancies were assessed in relation to the pool of candidates who had been through the district's principal preparation program. A participant said:

To have these conversations, ... the succession planning meetings, to look at vacancies for the whole year, to talk about "these are the types of leaders needed," to actually pull up candidates' data, create lists for the [principal supervisors]—all of that was new this school year that we're very excited about.

Another participant in that district echoed the enthusiasm about the opportunity to

...look at school needs [and] look at the skills and competencies [of individuals] coming out of the program and their past experiences, generating a group of candidates that would likely be successful, by matching their competencies with the needs of the school.

Prince George's County, which overhauled its hiring process in 2012, made other changes over the subsequent years and was considering still others in 2014. The district had moved from posting specific vacancies individually to a batched process of inviting applications and, to the extent possible, filling vacancies from the resulting eligible pool. As of spring 2014, however, the district was planning a shift to more use of "school-specific vacancies" and a streamlined selection process because some challenges had become apparent. Applications had been invited for two schools whose specialized foci did not have good matches in the existing pool, and, more broadly, district leaders were wondering about the wisdom of excluding strong candidates who happened to miss the "all-call" for applications. This example suggests that any of the districts may seek further refinement of their succession planning and hiring procedures before the Principal Pipeline Initiative ends.

Use of Data in Principal Placement

District leaders welcomed the idea of using more data, gathered in more ways, in the hiring and placement process. They particularly appreciated the value of data about candidates in making the right match between candidates and particular schools. By 2014, selection into the talent pool was becoming close to synonymous with readiness for placement in a principalship. And, as districts looked ahead more systematically to the expected principal vacancies, the hiring process was increasingly a matching process, in which the district tried to find the best fit for each of several schools from among interested candidates in the pool.

The six districts were able to use school-level data to inform matching. Prince George's County, for example, previously collected input informally from school community representatives at the time of hiring a principal, but starting in 2011 the district developed and maintained profiles of all schools that could be used in the hiring process. Using surveys along with achievement and other data, the district compiled a profile that would be relevant to the school's leadership needs, so that a principal candidate could be matched to any school where a vacancy arose.

District leaders were interested in various kinds of data about candidates for hiring purposes. They could readily access the data generated by their assessment process for a talent pool or district-run preparation program, data that were often housed in the same district office involved in principal hiring. They were also interested in data that had traditionally been collected by different divisions and stored in separate databases, including data on student performance in schools or classrooms where a candidate had previously served.

In this regard, district leaders appreciated the Principal Pipeline Initiative specifications—and the accompanying support—for development of a Leader Tracking System capturing individual, longitudinal data on

experience, performance, and assessed competencies. The data were not yet seamlessly available for the hiring process in spring 2014, but Hillsborough County had begun to use electronic fact sheets on potential candidates, and leaders in all districts looked forward to the routine use of the data in user-friendly formats. As the Leader Tracking Systems become operational, districts were expecting that data for hiring decisions would become easily accessible.

Examples of data that districts expected to use, and in some cases had begun using, for hiring included: relevant student achievement data as a teacher and assistant principal; evaluation scores as a teacher and assistant principal; experience with certain types of schools and students; language skills; performance on selection and exit assessments in preparation programs; and measured competencies related to instruction and leadership. Thus, for example, district leaders said in interviews that they might look for a candidate who had experience in particular grade levels or with English language learners and whose measured competencies matched the needs that they saw in the school. None claimed that matching was becoming an exact science, but they welcomed an easier process of spotting candidates whose backgrounds they considered promising matches for a school's most visible needs.

Much work had to take place in order for individual data to be accessible. Designing and populating each Leader Tracking System took time and required the expertise of specialists whom the districts employed or retained as consultants, as well as assistance and expert review from consultants engaged by The Wallace Foundation. In each district there were problems to be solved in pulling the data together and designing user interfaces. In New York City, for example, retrieving data from multiple data systems was a challenge. District information-technology staff also spoke of “being able to talk across the user and technical perspectives” in the process of finding and organizing the most relevant data to address users’ needs. “When they say what they want,” a staff member said of the prospective users of the new system, “there may be a hundred decisions [still needed] about what they *really* want.” The system designers conducted focus groups with prospective users and also ensured that top district leaders were involved in all key decisions.

A top leader in another district who had begun to see the early products of this kind of work said:

I think the behind-the-wall technology development has been extremely helpful. It allows us to— with ease—pull out those people who are in the pipeline who will be good matches for the schools. It's very, very helpful.

Human Judgment as Part of the Process

Although they were stepping up the use of systematically gathered data in hiring decisions, district leaders also explained that human judgment would continue to be part of the decision process, especially in matching candidates' strengths to particular school positions. They did not expect to find a formula that would drive data-based decisions but, rather, knew that decision makers would use judgment in interpreting the available data.

They also expected to use insights drawn from acquaintance with aspiring leaders. The district leaders valued their chance to observe prospective leaders in the district-run preparation programs in five of the districts, sometimes over multiple years. They knew they had to figure out how to incorporate their observations into selection in a responsible way, though. They recognized that their newer, systematically gathered data on experiences and measured skills offered a needed alternative to the kinds of informal impressions that had prevailed in the “old-boy network”:

It’s a mindset shift, it’s a culture shift. I think that in the past people just knew who they knew, and they did interviews and walkthroughs and had relationships, and that’s how they made decisions. We’re trying to get them to now also look at this really good data that shows how people performed on assessments aligned to the expectations that people are going to be held accountable for once they become principals, and to really think about what does this tell about whether this person is going to be the right fit for the role generally and for this school specifically.

Hiring Assistant Principals

Across all districts, principals customarily made the decisions about hiring assistant principals for their schools. Districts were beginning to give principals additional data about candidates, however, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Denver, and Hillsborough County selectively identified candidates eligible to become assistant principals.

A Denver official explained that the data gathered in screening process for assistant principal candidates were “almost exactly the same” as for principals, including a paper screen, interviews, and scenario-based assessments. One small exception was that fewer scenarios were used with aspiring assistant principals than with aspiring principals. The school principal led and shaped the school-level process of reviewing specific candidates from the assistant principal pool, however.

In Hillsborough County, the principal supervisors officially selected an assistant principal from a list of three finalists who had completed a selective preparation program in the district and whom a principal had identified on the basis of interviews. In most cases, though, the principal supervisors’ involvement was something of a formality; one interviewee estimated that the principal’s choice prevailed in “99 percent” of cases.

Gwinnett County also tried to infuse the wealth of data available at the district level into a process of hiring assistant principals, although it was still a process in which principals retained the decision-making authority. Rather than accepting a principal’s comment, “I kind of like so-and-so,” district officials would ask about the school’s specific needs and then identify likely matches among the candidates whom they had assessed and worked with in the selective preparation program for assistant principals. As one described it:

Principals hire for their schools, so the principals contact us for suggestions. There’s a process that we have in place through screening. There’s a list of available applicants. ... What we do instead of trying to make the decisions for them is just to provide as much information and evidence as possible so that they can make that best decision when hiring for their schools.

Remaining Issues in Hiring and Placement

District officials said they were pleased with the changes they had made in hiring procedures. Interviewees in each district spoke highly of the principal candidates they were seeing and the matches they were making between candidates and schools. Still, the ways in which they were using data were new and unproven. And they acknowledged challenges: finding leaders for some types of schools remained difficult; and their assessment procedures did not yet bring to light all the needed types of information about candidates.

Several kinds of schools continued to pose challenges for leadership selection. It was common for high schools to draw too few strong candidates. Leaders in all districts also acknowledged challenges in finding the right candidates for high-need schools. These could include schools with low student achievement or low family incomes, or schools in which parents of high socioeconomic status made many demands on the principal. District leaders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Hillsborough County said they had seen both high-achieving and low-achieving schools pose leadership challenges, and that they still did not have as many strong candidates as desired when a vacancy arose in a school of either kind.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses they had seen in the work of their newest principals, interviewees made some similar observations across all districts except New York City (where no one wanted to generalize across a cohort of 200 new principals annually). Leaders in the other five districts praised the new principals' deep knowledge of instruction. However, they expressed concern about some principals' difficulties in working with the school community. In the following comments, from three different districts, veteran leaders described this recurring area of weakness that they had seen in new, highly prepared principals:

They're very passionate people. They get into the school ready and passionate to make a change, and it's like they're coming in with a sledgehammer and making change, but ... they don't realize—it's personal leadership skills, they're missing the boat. No one's following them if they're going in with a sledgehammer. So how do they navigate through that politically?... Are there ways they can navigate it better so it's not as disruptive a change?

How do you use your positional authority? How do you read the culture of a school in terms of, say, this is not a turnaround school if we're sitting at 97 percent proficiency? Perhaps there are many things you need to work on, but we don't need to approach this like it's a turnaround situation in your first principalship out of the gate. ... I would say more of our principals struggle ... over their human relations and inability to get the work done through and with people.

I think sometimes you have to remind them about relationship building. They go in, and sometimes they go head on, tackle things. They have to remember they're not part of the family yet.

With this concern in mind, district leaders said they wished they had better ways to measure emotional intelligence (the term used in Denver) or “micro-political” skills (the term used in Charlotte-Mecklenburg) and to bolster aspiring principals' capacity to work effectively with a faculty, staff, and community. In Gwinnett County, a district leader described the use of a promising tool:

This year, [we used a] pilot disposition assessment which was quite enlightening. We found things about individuals that would derail them if they're not aware that they need to manage that part of their personalities. [Some who are] not touch-feely—now we know this, and they know it, and they're getting support to make them more aware of the messages they send. ... [In the past we've been] missing some pieces that get at ... the emotional wake a person will leave if they don't address those areas.

Summary: Changes under the Initiative, and a Look Ahead

During the grant period, all six districts revised the hiring process with further development and specification of hiring stages, criteria, and roles. These changes added more screening decisions and discussion prior to taking final candidates to the superintendent. Changes ranged from fine-tuning pieces of the process, such as selection criteria, to the development of entirely new components, such as talent pools and data-based procedures for matching candidates to positions. The results were hiring processes that were more systematic, deliberate, and standards-based.

- Every district had a new or modified screening step producing a pool of candidates who were allowed to apply for leadership positions. Overall, the districts moved closer to winnowing candidates to those with a good chance of fitting into a position within the next year or two. In New York City, a newly designed step provided ratings on standards-based competencies for all candidates in the hiring pool, which hiring managers could use. In Gwinnett and Hillsborough Counties, districts that had instituted sequences of two selective internal programs, the selection stages were now beginning years before a candidate might be considered for a principal position.
- Every district developed or modified selection criteria or instruments aligned with standards and specifying behaviors or other evidence for each criterion. Selection stages, whether into a pool or in hiring, were expected to incorporate the uniform use of rubrics, tasks, and interview questions aligned with standards. The districts invested in design and development efforts to identify priority competencies for each stage and provide tools and training for consistent ratings.
- Every district was using data on candidates and schools in more systematic ways to match candidates to specific school positions. Districts were adding procedures for considering data collaboratively as a group of senior managers. In Denver, Gwinnett County, and Hillsborough County, individual supervisors had lost some of their independence in winnowing to the finalists for a position.
- Denver and Hillsborough County introduced new procedures by which top district leaders held succession-planning discussions, reviewing data-based projections of principal vacancies and working toward agreement on their priorities for leader selection in the short term and leader development in the longer term. (Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Gwinnett County had similar planning processes in place before the initiative).

Finally, there was a noticeable sense of excitement in the districts around what officials saw as improvements in the hiring process, both those already accomplished and those that could follow from added selection stages and more readily available data.

6. Evaluation and Support

Every district worked on every component of the Principal Pipeline Initiative design in every year, but some staging of their work was evident. The component that included leader evaluation and professional support was on a slightly slower timeline than the others. This component was scheduled to be solidified in 2015.

Districts encountered the limits of their existing capacity for leader evaluation and support in their initial work on these functions. They worked to build capacity while they iteratively piloted, revised, scaled, and refined new procedures for evaluation and support. We begin the chapter with an overview of the types of capacity available in the districts and from their partner organizations, then analyze the work done to strengthen leader evaluation and support from 2011 to 2014.

Capacity for Evaluation and Support

Districts' capacity for principal evaluation and support resided in several different roles. The district staff who directly supervised principals took a major role in evaluation and were also expected to support principals. Support also came from mentors or coaches, from the central offices in charge of professional development, and from external partners.

Principal Supervisors

The participating districts put their principal supervisors in a dual role of both evaluating and supporting principals. New York City was a partial exception, with an anomalous arrangement in which formal responsibilities for supervision and support were assigned to two different groups. By state law, community superintendents or high-school superintendents served as formal rating officers of principals. The clusters and networks, created as a school support structure independent of the geographically based superintendencies, were expected to give schools and their principals feedback and support. Still, the New York City principal supervisors whom we interviewed also gave numerous specific examples of ways in which they tried to create learning opportunities for principals and assistant principals whom they supervised. Supervision arrangements in the other districts were also redesigned for a greater focus on instructional issues and on building principals' capacity.

Takeaways

1. Districts added capacity through positions and training for supervisors, mentors, or coaches, trying to give new principals a larger amount of skilled support.
2. Developing evaluation criteria aligned with standards required multiple rounds of clarifying the criteria and preparing the supervisors to use them.
3. Principals tended to see mentors or coaches as more helpful than supervisors, although both groups received positive ratings.
4. Data on individual strengths and weaknesses could support greater tailoring of professional development, but work remained to be done to realize this vision for principals and assistant principals.

A study of the principal supervisor role that The Wallace Foundation commissioned from the Council of the Great City Schools was influential in this initiative (Corcoran, Casserly, Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall, & Simon, 2013). Based on a national survey and on site visits to the Principal Pipeline Initiative districts, the study's recommendations for any sizable district included increased staffing, clearer goals, professional development and coaching, and clearer lines of both communication and accountability for principal supervisors. All of the districts in the Principal Pipeline Initiative subsequently made plans to enlarge their cadres of supervisors—thus reducing each supervisor's caseload of principals—and to continue clarifying and supporting the supervisor's role. Denver added enough principal supervisors in 2012-13 to reduce each supervisor's caseload to ten principals.

Early in the initiative, district leaders had seen tension in the shift that they were asking their principal supervisors to make, from hands-on solvers of administrative problems to coaches strengthening instructional leadership. As of 2014, no district leader claimed that the tension between administrative and instructional emphases had gone away. A leader in one district said of the shift in role that the principal supervisors were experiencing:

It has been a slow but steady process. You can see the shifting of the mindsets in terms of where their priorities are, how they look at the big picture now. ...[But] trying to change the mindset sometimes, or the way of work, ... [can be] difficult. It's almost like a rubber band. You stretch it, but as soon as you let go it goes right back.

Capacity for Mentoring, Coaching, and Professional Development from Inside and Outside the District

Each district employed or had contracts with individuals who provided support for novice principals. For example, novice principals in Denver had two distinct types of support: “mentors” who were experienced principals in the district and helped with whatever problems arose on the job; and “executive coaches” on contract with the district who worked with them on the process of clarifying and pursuing their professional goals in leadership.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg organized its principal support into a multi-year sequence. The district had started its year-by-year program of induction support before the initiative began, and it used initiative support to extend the program to a full five years. The design illustrates the interplay of internal and external sources of support for novice principals:

- First- and second-year principals were matched with a Consultant Coach who met with and advised principals in small groups.
- Beginning in 2011-12, second-year principals participated in the National SAM Innovation Project. SAM coaches worked with principals on time use and instructional leadership, and by 2014, SAM coaching was conducted by district staff members.
- Third-year principals participated in the Executive Leadership Institute at Queens University of Charlotte. A collaboration between the university's education and business schools, the program trained principals on leadership styles and organizational change.

- Fourth-year principals participated in the Innovation Institute of the nonprofit McColl Center for Art and Innovation, which focused on innovation for leaders from a variety of backgrounds.
- A fifth-year capstone experience through the Center for Intentional Leadership rounded out the support sequence.

Across districts, external partners also supported principals. The National SAM Innovation Project worked with principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, as described above, and also in the other districts. The New York City Leadership Academy had had a contract to provide coaching to all first-year principals in New York City since well before the initiative. New Leaders provided ongoing coaching to its graduates after they became principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, New York City, and Prince George's County. The School Leaders Network helped organize and facilitate peer learning for new principals and assistant principals in New York City and Prince George's County.

Another role for partner organizations was that of building district staff members' capacity to support new principals. The New York City Leadership Academy worked with Denver to support mentoring training, for example, and it also built capacity in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's partnerships for preparation and induction. New or expanded partnerships for novice-principal support in three districts grew out of the districts' and partners' previous experience working together:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg received help with the coaching process from two universities. The director of a partner preservice program at Winthrop University also had a major role in helping the district develop a coaching program and provided training for the district's coaches. Queens University started a three-day academy for the district's leadership coaches.
- Hillsborough County contracted with the New Teacher Center to help develop a principal coaching program, train the coaches, and work with principal supervisors to help build their skills in leader development. Later, Cross & Jofus was engaged to build capacity for principal evaluation aligned with the district's leader competencies.
- Under the grant, Prince George's County expanded the participation of mentor principals in the National Association of Elementary School Principals' Leadership Immersion Institute. Mentor principals won special certification by participating in training and in a nine-month internship program in which they practiced providing feedback and support to new administrators.

Leader Evaluation

Each district came to the initiative with a history of evaluating principals' performance, but each revisited its procedures under the initiative. Newly articulated district leader standards, as discussed in Chapter 3, were at the core of this process. State education agencies also played a part; for the five states (all but Colorado) that were grantees under the federal Race to the Top program, establishing criteria for leader

evaluation was part of the work for which the state was held accountable by the U.S. Department of Education. Gwinnett County and Hillsborough County, which had evaluation systems for leaders before their states did, were able to proceed in fine-tuning their own systems rather than taking on entirely new state-mandated systems. Prince George's County submitted its new evaluation system to the state for approval in 2013 and was asked to make only minor changes. Charlotte-Mecklenburg was required to use the state's evaluation criteria but also developed evaluation rubrics that reflected local priorities as well as state priorities. In New York City, as described in detail in Chapter 3, the local Quality Review Rubric was the source for a new principal evaluation for which the district succeeded in winning state approval.

The Process of Developing Standards-Based Evaluation

Principal evaluation in every district in 2014 included measures of student performance and also ratings that supervisors gave in relation to a set of standards-based evaluation criteria. The criteria for supervisors' ratings were evolving. For example, Gwinnett County was using its longstanding Results-Based Evaluation System, in which one major component continued to be school-level performance benchmarked against comparable schools in other urban districts nationwide. The district was beginning to use new procedures and criteria for supervisor ratings, however, with the intention of phasing in a new system for that component of the evaluation system.

At the request of The Wallace Foundation, five of the districts participating in the initiative had undertaken to use the VAL-ED instrument, developed (with Wallace support) to capture evidence on research-based elements of principal effectiveness (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). This instrument gathers ratings in a 360° process from the principal, the supervisor, and teachers. (The sixth district, Denver, used its own 360° instrument instead of VAL-ED.) Four districts used VAL-ED on a pilot basis or only as a source of formative feedback to leaders, but Hillsborough County used it districtwide as part of its consequential evaluation for principals.

Some interviewees commented that 360° ratings provided valuable insights in assessing principals' performance. In both Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Denver, principal supervisors reported instances in which they had recommended dismissal of a principal after learning that he or she lacked teachers' support or respect. Their assessments had relied on additional information, beyond a survey, but they cited this experience in endorsing the collection of data from teachers. As one of the supervisors said:

We had to dismiss a principal last year, and I will say, teacher perception surveys often play a big role in that, because if your teachers have absolutely no confidence in you, how can you run a school?

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Denver, Gwinnett County, and Hillsborough County reported doing extensive work to prepare principal supervisors to use new evaluation instruments. The process of learning how best to operationalize new standards in evaluation instruments was also informing refinement of the indicators that accompanied the standards—a process that was far from finished in spring 2014. A Denver official described how principal supervisors were carrying out one step in beginning to calibrate their ratings on indicators and the associated rubrics:

We went through all the different indicators and said, what data do you look at? For each of those indicators, what would be the kinds of data and evidence that you're collecting? And then we said, okay, that is a ton because there were charts all around the room full of stuff. So then we said, let's narrow it and look across these, where do we see commonality? We call those high-leverage data points. We listed those out and then spent the next session actually looking at, okay, how do you collect your data?

A Gwinnett County official also emphasized the careful work being done in the process of calibration:

In the new principal evaluation system [we are] now watching the team [of principal supervisors] really look at wrestling through these standards, and how you evaluate them in a consistent format.

Assistant Principal Evaluation

For the most part, assistant principal evaluation instruments mirrored those used for principal evaluation. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the state-mandated evaluation instrument was identical for principals and assistant principals. In three other districts, the instrument was at least lightly adapted; in Prince George's County, for example, the indicator language for standards was reframed with words such as "supports the principal in..." each leadership function. Gwinnett County had similar minor adaptations in the assistant principal evaluation. Denver had an "evidence guide" for rating assistant principals that differed from the one used with principals, although the overall expectations for the two positions were aligned with each other. Hillsborough County used its own 360° instrument, aligned with the district's leader competencies, for assistant principals. A district official commented that the results gave principals useful information about the competencies in which their assistant principals needed further development. The major exception was in New York City, which had neither formal standards nor an evaluation instrument for assistant principals.

Just as principals had the final say on hiring assistant principals, they held the reins in evaluating assistant principals. Some district officials expressed concern about the way principals carried out these evaluations, commenting that principals should more assertively communicate negative results to their assistant principals. This was related to their concern that some marginal performers were occupying assistant principal positions and thus were blocking opportunities for aspiring leaders with higher potential.

Perceptions of Evaluation among Principals and Assistant Principals

Survey respondents expressed mildly positive views about their experience with leader evaluation (Exhibits 14 and 15). Readers should note that these findings pertain to the evaluations conducted in 2012 and 2013. We asked about the previous school year's evaluation because our surveys were fielded in early spring each year, before the current year's full cycle of evaluation and feedback was likely to have been completed. There were no significant differences in responses across years of the survey (i.e., in the responses pertaining to evaluation in 2012 vs. 2013).

Exhibit 14: Principal perceptions of their 2012 and 2013 performance evaluation

The performance evaluation system:	Percent of principals saying to a considerable or great extent of their 2012 evaluation <i>(N=204)</i>	Percent of principals saying to a considerable or great extent of their 2013 evaluation <i>(N=259)</i>
a. Was useful for purposes of informing my professional practice	65%	54%
b. Provided clear expectations for my performance that were consistently and clearly communicated	64	58
c. Adequately/accurately reflected my performance	63	54
d. Was useful for purposes of identifying/defining my professional development needs	58	50
e. Captured the breadth and complexity of my leadership role	58	49

Exhibit reads: In 2013, 65 percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their 2012 performance evaluation was useful for purposes of informing their professional practice to a considerable extent or to a great extent. In 2014, 54 percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts reported that their 2013 performance evaluation was useful for purposes of informing their professional practice to a considerable extent or to a great extent.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013 and 2014.

Exhibit 15: Assistant principal perceptions of their 2012 and 2013 performance evaluation

The performance evaluation system:	Percent of APs saying to a considerable or great extent of their 2012 evaluation <i>(N=132)</i>	Percent of APs saying to a considerable or great extent of their 2013 evaluation <i>(N=243)</i>
a. Adequately/accurately reflected my performance	69%	59%
b. Was useful for purposes of informing my professional practice	64	60
c. Provided clear expectations for my performance that were consistently and clearly communicated	62	56
d. Was useful for purposes of identifying/defining my professional development needs	64	56
e. Captured the breadth and complexity of my leadership role	59	51

Exhibit reads: In 2013, 69 percent of first-, second-, and third-year assistant principals in the six districts reported that their 2012 performance evaluation adequately/accurately reflected their performance to a considerable extent or to a great extent. In 2014, 59 percent of first-, second-, and third-year assistant principals in the six districts reported that their 2013 performance evaluation adequately/accurately reflected their performance to a considerable extent or to a great extent.

Source: Assistant Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013 and 2014.

Most principals (77 percent) received their evaluation results in written form, and most (64 percent) had a formal meeting with their evaluator to receive feedback (Exhibit 16). About one-quarter of responding principals had received feedback in an informal meeting with their evaluator. Among the principals who had a mentor or coach, between a quarter and a third received evaluation feedback in an informal meeting with that person. These responses did not change significantly between years.

Exhibit 16: Feedback received by principals on the results of their 2012 and 2013 performance evaluation

Did you receive formal and/or informal feedback on the results of your performance evaluation for LAST school year?	Percent of respondents who were principals in 2011-12 (N=204)	Percent of respondents who were principals in 2012-13 (N=259)
a. Yes, written report	77%	77%
b. Yes, required formal meeting with my evaluator	64	64
c. Yes, informal meeting with my mentor/coach	26	30
d. Yes, informal meeting with my evaluator	24	26
e. No, I received no feedback on my evaluation	5	3
f. Other	1	1

Exhibit reads: In both 2013 and 2014, 77 percent of second- and third-year principals across the six districts reported that they received a written report summarizing the results of their evaluation in the previous school year.

Note: Item c was calculated only for those respondents who reported that they had a mentor/coach (in 2013, N=129; in 2014, N=166).

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2013 and 2014.

An example of the positive views of the evaluation process that some principals reported in surveys and focus groups came from a principal in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, who highlighted the value of informal communication. This principal said that the evaluation instrument itself needed improvement. However, she emphasized that recurring, informal interaction with a supervisor provided useful evaluative feedback grounded in an understanding of the school:

The feedback that I get from my supervisor is ongoing. It is not, "Okay, here's the evaluation tool, we're going to sit down and have an hour's conversation about it and that's your feedback." The feedback comes throughout meetings when I talk with him during school visits, phone calls on the cell phone, emails back and forth. ... he knows where I'm at, he knows where my school is, he understands the culture and climate of my building, and he and I have had conversations about areas that I need to grow in and areas where I have strengths.

Professional Development and Tailored Support

As of spring 2014, all districts were following the initiative’s design by making—or planning—improvements in the professional development and individual support they provided to principals. Additional support for assistant principals was being considered.

Support for Principals

As described earlier in this chapter, all six districts had worked to bolster the capacity of supervisors and mentors or coaches to work with principals. Districts reorganized the professional development offered to groups of school leaders, and they continued to refine their policies and practices on coaching. Leaders in several districts expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of tailoring professional learning and support opportunities to individual principals’ identified needs.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg was adding a new senior position in its professional development department in summer 2014: an executive director of leadership development whose full-time responsibility would be the professional learning opportunities for principals, assistant principals, and district leaders. One priority for the position would be professional development for those who had been selected into the talent pool; another would be bringing a more standard approach districtwide. A district leader described the work to be done, emphasizing the need to develop differentiated options within a consistent framework of leadership development:

We have strong induction, so it’s not to take the place of that. It’s more about giving people more options, and trying to bring it all together and have a consistent way we develop APs and principals from an internal perspective.... A major part of our strategic plan is continuing to invest in leadership development.

In Denver, a centerpiece of support was the introduction of coaches focusing on team building and personal leadership with new principals. For aspiring principals in the district-run Learn to Lead program, the district’s standards were used to frame individual plans for professional growth, based on each participant’s measured strengths and weaknesses. Denver’s intended changes in professional development centered on “shifting from sort of ‘one size fits all’ to a more differentiated approach.” A first step in that direction was to offer more choice in professional development offerings, but a district leader explained in 2014 that the next step would be to move beyond relying on a voluntary approach and instead determine “how can we guide people” to the resources they needed. Like the aspiring leaders, the principals had professional growth plans, and the district expected to gather and use data on the principals’ progress on their plans, as well as on the extent to which they had taken advantage of particular professional development offerings.

Gwinnett County reorganized its principal supervision structure in 2013-14, adding more supervisors to support principals as instructional leaders. The district also continued to support principals with “leader mentors,” who were retired principals with strong records in instructional leadership, offering coaching on

tasks as they arose and providing guidance on leadership responsibilities. An innovation in 2013-14 was the use of a log to capture a record of the interactions that each leader mentor had with each principal. The district's principal meetings had been reorganized, shortening the time spent on general announcements so as to focus more time discussing problems of practice, such as employee engagement. In Gwinnett County, as in Denver, there was an intention of increasingly tailoring professional development offerings. As a district official put it, "It's not just, 'we have a good seminar.' It's really customizing that to the principal's need and level of performance. That's very ambitious, I understand that."

Hillsborough County incrementally increased the number of supervisors and coaches working with principals and provided them with coaching for their roles (as described earlier), in an effort to provide not only more support for principals but also support that was increasingly focused on instructional leadership. As of 2014, one of the changes under way was linking the supervision and coaching to professional development. After sessions on a particular leadership skill, the supervisor and coach would follow up, asking a principal how he or she planned to put the skill to work in the school.

New York City had put support arrangements in place during the 2000s, in particular the network structure and the coaching support for first-year principals from the New York City Leadership Academy. Under new district leadership in 2014, these arrangements were still in place.

Prince George's County also had new leadership in 2013-14. The first change introduced in principal support was the re-introduction of universal meetings for principals, with the aim of ensuring that all received the same, clear messages about district priorities. At the end of the school year, additional principal supervisors were hired from the ranks of principals.

In support, as in hiring, district leaders saw the potential of the data in the Leader Tracking System to improve the district's work. They believed that individual leaders' assessed competencies could and should drive the differentiation of support. A district-level interviewee in Charlotte-Mecklenburg sketched a vision that had counterparts in the other districts as well:

Hopefully as we get our Leader Tracking System all fully implemented and developed, we'll be able to take what we're learning from our current selection process and really identify which of these competencies are the person's strength, what are the areas for growth, and be able to give that data over to the [professional development] department so that they'll be able to provide what's needed for each of those people, and giving that information to our [principal supervisors and their staff] so that they can work individually with the people within their groups, and even trickle that down to the principals so they know where to help their APs grow.

Principals' survey responses did not show significant changes in the overall extent of mentoring or coaching from 2013 to 2014. A high proportion of first-year principals in every district had mentors or coaches in both 2013 and 2014, according to our survey data, but districts varied in the extent to which they assigned mentors or coaches to principals after their first year on the job (Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 17: Percent of principals having mentors or coaches, by cohort, 2013 and 2014

District	2013			2014		
	First-year principals (N=112)	Second-year principals (N=140)	Third-year principals (N=87)	First-year principals (N=201)	Second-year principals (N=183)	Third-year principals (N=138)
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	100%	100%	27%	81%	82%	21%
Denver	87	25	N/A*	88	76	48
Gwinnett County	100	79	29	100	100	50
Hillsborough County	100	100	94	100	100	N/A*
New York City	100**	75**	65**	96	54	45
Prince George's County	90	65	N/A*	87	63	0
OVERALL	95	72	49	93	80	35

Exhibit reads: Among first-year principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 100 percent reported having a coach or mentor in 2013 and 81 percent reported having a coach or mentor in 2014.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2013 and 2014.

* Percentage not reported due to small N.

**New York data should be viewed with caution due to the low response rate (31 percent).

Both supervisors and mentors or coaches were expected to provide support to novice principals, but principals might perceive differences in these sources of support. Therefore our survey posed two parallel questions to principals, one asking them to rate the support they had received from their supervisor in 2013-14 (identifying this person as "the person who evaluates you," since the supervisors' titles varied across and within districts), and the other asking the same question about support from their mentor or coach (if they had one). While principals gave high ratings to both groups for their knowledge and for the process and quality of the support they provided, statistically significant differences were found in several responses (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18: Principal perceptions of the support received from principal supervisor/evaluator and mentor/coach, 2014

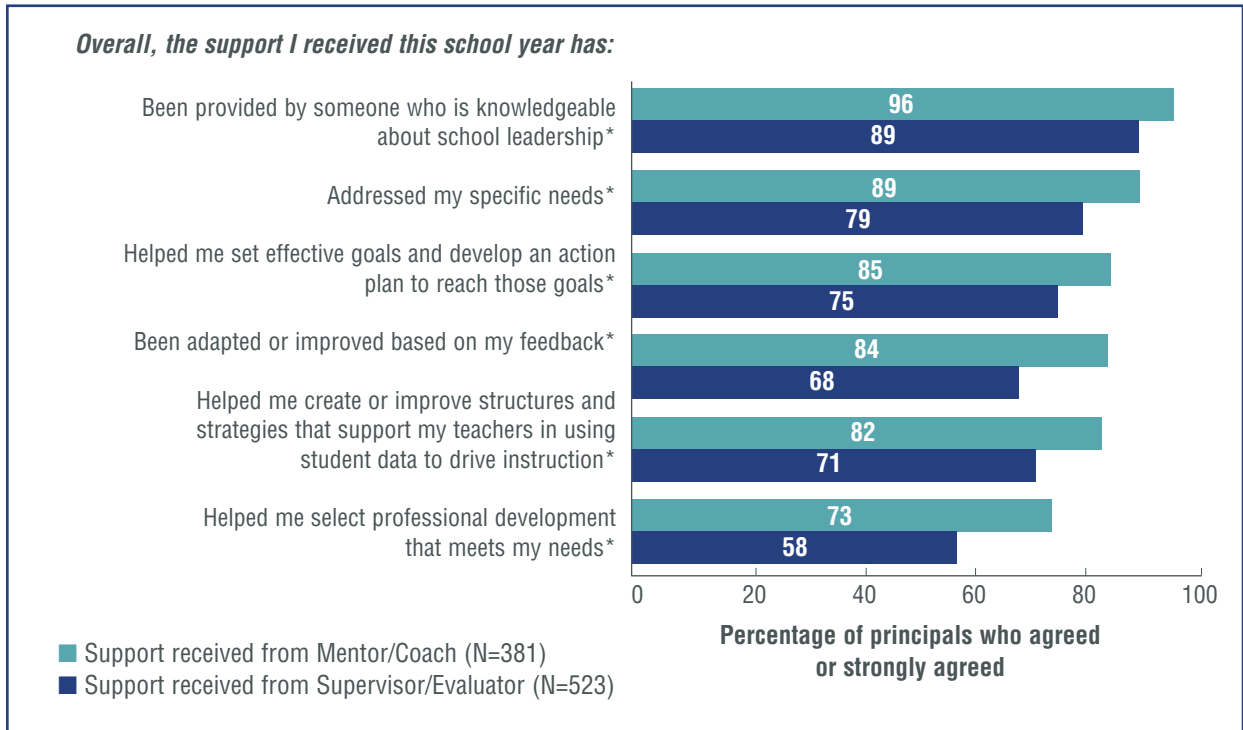


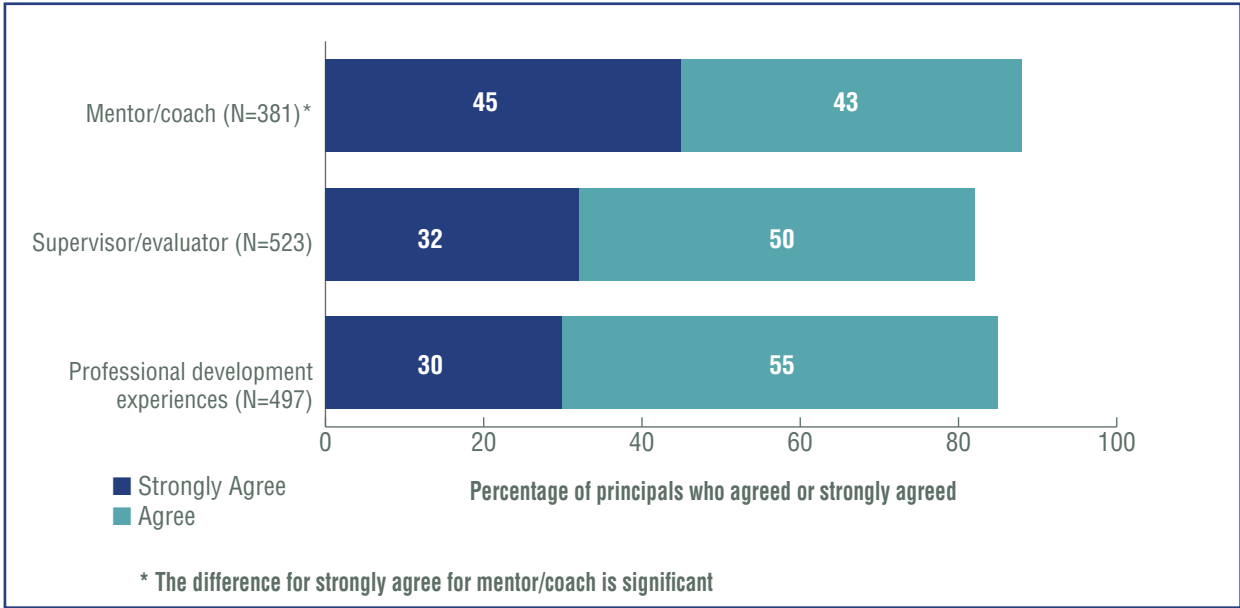
Exhibit reads: Ninety-six percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts who had a mentor/coach agreed that the support they have received from their mentor/coach has been provided by someone who is knowledgeable in school leadership; 89 percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts agreed that the support they have received from their principal supervisor/evaluator has been provided by someone who is knowledgeable in school leadership.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2014.

*The difference for mentor/coach is significant.

Similarly, the survey allowed us to compare principals' reports of the extent to which each of three potential sources of support—a mentor or coach, a supervisor, or professional development—had led them to make changes in their work (Exhibit 19). The individual help from a mentor or coach had the highest rate of strong agreement as a perceived stimulus to change in professional practice.

Exhibit 19: Principal agreement that different sources of support led them to make changes in their work, 2014



66

Exhibit reads: Forty-five percent of first-, second-, and third-year principals in the six districts strongly agreed and 43 percent agreed that the support they received from their mentor/coach led them to make changes in their work.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014.

Support for Assistant Principals

Formal programs of support for new assistant principals existed in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Hillsborough County. Charlotte-Mecklenburg had a two-year induction program for its assistant principals, including monthly meetings for professional development led by district staff on topics such as instructional coaching and school improvement plans. The district also offered an Assistant Principal Academy at a nearby university designed to help the assistant principals see their opportunities for influence as school leaders. A new district position, due to start in summer 2014, was going to focus on professional development for principals and assistant principals and was expected to strengthen the assistant principal induction. A district official spoke of the importance of this work:

I think that we’ve recognized that we could do a better job of helping with the induction of our new APs. Because that’s our real, best, true pipeline to the principalship, so if we spend a lot more time grooming and developing them it will pay off in the end.

Hillsborough County launched a two-year induction program for assistant principals under the initiative, focused on individual mentoring. Each novice assistant principal was assigned a mentor who would supplement the informal mentoring that principals were expected to offer to their own new assistant principals. A cadre of “master mentors” helped to oversee the mentoring.

Prince George’s County was also planning individualized professional development for assistant principals, while New York City recognized this as a possible area for improvement. An official in New York City said:

There are programs for assistant principals that are designed to help them become principals but not [programs that say,] you just became an AP and you want to learn how to do the job well and you need some support. We don’t have strong centrally based programs for that.

Rates of mentoring or coaching support reported by assistant principals varied a great deal across districts, with no clear trend from 2013 to 2014 (Exhibit 20). Hillsborough County stood out in both years as most consistently providing mentoring or coaching for assistant principals in their first two years. The other districts were less apt to provide mentoring or coaching support to assistant principals beyond their first year on the job.

Exhibit 20: Percent of assistant principals having mentors or coaches, by cohort, 2013 and 2014

District	2013			2014		
	First-year principals (N=148)	Second-year principals (N=153)	Third-year principals (N=41)	First-year APs (N=285)	Second-year APs (N=199)	Third-year APs (N=175)
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	50%	20%	N/A*	26%	28%	21%
Denver	81	39	18	74	37	29
Gwinnett County	52	17	11	97	57	23
Hillsborough County	100	96	N/A*	89	84	52
New York City	N/A**	N/A**	N/A**	50	41	31
Prince George’s County	43	24	N/A*	19	N/A*	14
OVERALL	66	44	13	58	43	28

Exhibit reads: Among first-year assistant principals in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 50 percent reported having a coach or mentor in 2013 and 26 percent reported having a coach or mentor in 2014.

Source: Assistant Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013 and 2014.

* Percentage not reported due to small N.

**New York data were excluded from the 2013 analysis due to low response rate.

Summary: Changes under the Initiative and a Look Ahead

The districts had introduced what they believed to be promising improvements in their systems of evaluation and support for school leaders. They had begun to address the historical weakness of principal professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). However, as of 2014 no district leader claimed that their evaluation and support systems were fully satisfactory—or even fully in place. Leaders in each district acknowledged that more work lay ahead in firming up evaluation systems and deepening professional learning opportunities.

In evaluation, all districts had made changes under the initiative. New York City had evaluation criteria for principals that district leaders believed to be working very well due to their alignment with the Quality Review Rubric. Each of the other districts had begun to introduce a new or revised evaluation system but was continuing to fine-tune it and, in particular, to work with principal supervisors to calibrate their ratings. They expressed optimism that the alignment of evaluation with their leader standards and competencies would help them target their efforts to strengthen principals' performance.

Leader support intensified with the hiring of additional staff to serve as supervisors, mentors, or coaches, and districts continued their efforts to build the capacity of those charged with supporting principals' instructional leadership. They enlisted the help of partner organizations to deliver coaching or to work with district supervisors, mentors, and coaches. Mentoring or coaching was widely reported by first-year principals but much less so by principals in their third year. The extent of mentoring and coaching for assistant principals varied a great deal across districts, and district leaders acknowledged that they could do better in the process of induction for assistant principals.

This component of the Principal Pipeline Initiative, as expected, showed less complete implementation than others, as districts worked to craft better functioning systems. In particular, they were addressing the complexity of providing reliable ratings on their new evaluation criteria and organizing systems of support that would reach more leaders with effective, individually tailored learning opportunities.

7. Conclusions

Three years into their work in the Principal Pipeline Initiative, the six districts had learned much and were deepening the strategic thinking that they brought to bear on strengthening their principal corps. They were seeing the feasibility of long-term improvements in their own policies and practices that might resolve the problems that they had initially perceived: too few strong candidates were applying for principalships; and too many novice principals were struggling. Their work was not finished in 2014, and only the earliest results had emerged. Still, other districts may find useful ideas in these districts' priorities and strategies.

Several policy instruments and approaches helped the districts take charge of their opportunities to influence individual aspiring and novice principals and, thus, to improve school leadership districtwide. Systematic data use was one. The districts were compiling and organizing data about individual leaders and aspiring leaders into tracking systems with user-friendly interfaces that could inform decisions. By looking systematically at data on individuals' past performance and career progressions, they believed they could make better-informed decisions on hiring and placing principals. Data could also inform decisions about tailoring support to a particular leader's needs and, further, organizational decisions about strengthening programs of preparation and support.

The standards and competencies articulated for school leaders proved to be a more powerful policy instrument than many (including the authors of this report) had expected. Rather than sitting on shelves, the districts' statements about the capabilities and performance that they expected in school leaders were put to work in job descriptions, in the curricula of preparation programs, and, crucially, in assessments and support systems for aspiring and novice principals. This work was not finished in 2014; the indicators and rubrics that accompanied standards were undergoing revision as district staff learned from pilot tests. At this point, however, the standards and competencies could be seen as fulfilling their purpose of providing a common language for leadership in each district. In New York City, where a careful process of standards development was completed and put to work in the official process of principal evaluation, district leaders saw its power in "making sure that hiring managers, central office, principals in the field, coaches, [and] principal prep programs" had a shared understanding of the work for which principals were held accountable.

In principal preparation, districts embraced two approaches: they created or enhanced their own programs for preparing principals; and they forged closer working relationships with "partner programs" in nearby universities and other organizations. For four of the districts (Denver, Gwinnett County, Hillsborough County, and Prince George's County), the district-run programs were especially critical parts of the district strategy for preparation, offering what district leaders saw as a particularly valuable capstone following the preparation that led to administrator certification. Charlotte-Mecklenburg and New York City maintained their position as assertive "consumers" of the graduates of outside programs, while New York City also enlarged district-run programs as key parts of its preparation portfolio.

The hiring process was an area in which district leaders expressed particular confidence that they had made critical improvements. A trusted policy instrument here was the repeated use of assessment as aspiring leaders made their way toward the ultimate stage of placement as a principal. Most districts installed additional selection gates along the way to hiring, such as selection into a talent pool from which hiring managers would choose new principals. New York City did not make this particular change, but it did introduce new assessments—aligned with standards—at the final stage before aspirants could apply for jobs. In all districts, then, hiring managers had access to additional information, systematically collected, about the specific competencies of candidates. District leaders were enthusiastic about the power of assessment data, although their enthusiasm was tempered by their observation of two issues: the new rating procedures were time-consuming for central staff and ran the risk of creating burnout; and many recognized that interpersonal leadership qualities were not well captured in the data systems.

In reflecting on their districts' ongoing work with evaluation and support systems, district leaders again hailed the value of standards and data. The same standards and competencies that shaped principal preparation, job descriptions, and assessments for hiring could also be put to work in evaluating novice principals' strengths and weaknesses, and the resulting data could be captured and used for individual targeting of professional development and support. Supervision that blended evaluation and support was a preferred approach, and districts added staff who would provide mentoring or coaching to principals.

In this component-by-component summary of the districts' work, it is important to emphasize the extent to which strategic thinking underlay the districts' actions and plans. Top leaders interviewed for this study saw how their work on preparation could support better hiring decisions; how ambiguities or gaps that came to light in principal evaluation could inform fine-tuning of standards documents; how principal supervisors could help refine the practical demonstrations and scoring rubrics used in hiring, based on their deep knowledge of leadership in the district; and other ways in which districts' work and learning were connected throughout components of the initiative.

District capacity for designing and managing a pipeline was growing and, along with it, district capacity to use the pipeline to support educational priorities. The Leader Tracking System, for example, brought a new kind of capacity for data-informed decisions that district leaders welcomed. All of the districts built their staff capacity to manage relationships with preferred external preparation programs, and five of them added to their in-house capacity for principal preparation. Capacity for succession planning was growing with the introduction of new organizational routines for this task. New positions for principal mentoring, coaching, and supervision brought more staff capacity to the functions of support and evaluation, as did the training in these functions offered by partner organizations. And, once they had these and other kinds of capacity in place, district leaders were eager to use them for strategic improvements in school leadership.

As districts looked ahead, they focused increasingly on their assistant principals. Their data, like ours, revealed that most new principals came from the ranks of assistant principals. Therefore, the processes for preparing, selecting, evaluating, and coaching assistant principals were building blocks for the future of the district's leadership. District leaders were attending not only to the individuals currently in those positions, sizing up their potential for advancement, but also to the systems that they had in place for developing and supporting assistant principals, recognizing that they had much work to do in improving those systems.

The process of implementing the Principal Pipeline Initiative did not end in 2014. Districts' work plans set further milestones to be reached before the grants expire in 2016. Just as important, district leaders continued to revisit and refine the work that they had already done, seeking improvement in every component as they continued to learn from experience.

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Appendix A: Survey Weighting and Analyses

To determine post-stratification survey weights for each district, the inverse of the number of respondents from the district out of the total number of respondents to the survey was divided by six, the total number of districts (Exhibit A-1). For example, in 2014, there were 52 principal respondents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and 541 total principal respondents from all six districts, resulting in a survey weight of 1.73 (i.e., $(541/52)/6$). The 2013 data from principals and assistant principals were weighted in a similar fashion.

Exhibit A-1: Principal and assistant principal survey weights by district and year				
District	2013		2014	
	Principal weight	Assistant principal weight	Principal weight	Assistant principal weight
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	1.37	1.12	1.73	1.26
Denver	1.05	0.76	1.33	1.23
Gwinnett County	1.51	0.62	1.92	0.77
Hillsborough County	1.07	1.48	2.15	1.15
New York City	0.58	N/A	0.34	0.54
Prince George's County	1.01	2.80	1.43	2.80

Exhibit reads: The survey weight for Charlotte-Mecklenburg principals in 2013 was 1.37; the survey weight for Charlotte-Mecklenburg assistant principals in 2013 was 1.12. The survey weight for Charlotte-Mecklenburg principals in 2014 was 1.73; the survey weight for Charlotte-Mecklenburg assistant principals in 2014 was 1.26.

Note: Survey weights for 2013 assistant principals were calculated out of five rather than six districts. The response rate in New York City among assistant principals was low, so those assistant principal responses were excluded from analysis in 2013.

The main method of analysis for this report was to analyze cross-sectional data from 2013 and 2014. The 2013 data included principals and assistant principals who started in their position from 2010 to 2013, and the 2014 data included principals and assistant principals who started their position from 2011 to 2014. Some of the cross-tabulations in this report examine the differences between principals and assistant principals who started their positions at different points in time. In creating cohorts of principals, the 2010-11 cohort includes any principal or assistant principal who started between March 2010 and February 2011; the 2011-12 cohort includes any principal or assistant principal who started between March 2011 and February 2012; the 2012-13 cohort includes any principal or assistant principal who started between March 2012 and February 2013; and the 2013-14 cohort includes any principal or assistant principal who started between March 2013 and February 2014. For comparisons that required responses from the 2010-11 cohort, 2013 survey weights were applied to their data; 2014 survey weights were applied for all other cohorts.

Many comparisons in the report are presented along with information about whether the difference between estimated percentages is statistically significant. One method of determining the statistical significance of the difference between two percentages is to compare the confidence intervals of the two percentages. Confidence intervals provide information about the accuracy of the estimated percentages. If the confidence intervals for two percentages do not overlap, then the difference is deemed statistically significant.

Appendix B: An Exploratory Comparative Analysis

Our principal survey affords an opportunity for an exploratory comparison of principals' reports on their preparation with the findings of an important prior study (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), which helped inform the design of the Principal Pipeline Initiative. The prior study surveyed two groups of respondents: graduates of the programs highlighted as exemplars and a national comparison group of principals. Our survey replicates items from that study, allowing a comparison of the results.

Caveats are in order for these comparisons. One relates to the time that has elapsed between the prior and current research. A national survey conducted in 2013 or 2014 might well be expected to yield results different from those of respondents surveyed in the previous decade. It is likely that the preparation programs for principals hired recently in the Principal Pipeline Initiative districts reflected current trends in school leadership practice, such as newly intensified expectations for data use. Moreover, they might reflect attention to the research on principal preparation that had not yet been reported a decade ago. However, the extent to which preparation programs approach or exceed the standard held up as exemplary in the prior research is of interest, and we report on it annually in this evaluation.

With respect to assessments of program content and instructional approaches, and self-reported perceptions of their preparation for specific aspects of leadership, we found that the reports of novice principals in these districts were fairly similar to those of graduates of the exemplary programs studied by Darling-Hammond and colleagues, and somewhat more favorable than those of that study's national sample. In comparisons where the effect size exceeds .50, we interpret the difference as at least moderate in size and therefore likely to be meaningful. Many of the differences that appear in these exhibits, although statistically significant, show small effect sizes; in these cases we do not interpret the apparent differences as being meaningful. Thus, for example, principals in our 2014 survey reported much greater emphasis on leadership for school improvement in their preservice than did Darling-Hammond's *national sample* ($d=.99$) (Exhibit B-2). On the other hand, we do not view the apparent difference in emphasis on leadership for school improvement between the principals we surveyed and the graduates of Darling-Hammond's *exemplary programs* as meaningful; this is because, although the difference was statistically significant, the effect size was small ($d=-.15$).

With those caveats and suggestions for interpretation, we show in Exhibits B-1 through B-6 the comparisons between our survey results and those of the prior study.

Exhibit B-1: Principal perceptions of preservice content, 2013

To what extent were the following qualities/practices true of your formal leadership preparation training?	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2013	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (n=326)	Exemplary Program (N=242)		National Comparison (N=629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Program content emphasized leadership for school improvement	4.27	4.49**	-.26	3.63**	.77
b. Program content emphasized instructional leadership	4.27	4.58**	-.37	4.13*	.17
c. Program gave me a strong orientation to the principalship as a career	4.06	4.39**	-.39	3.73**	.39

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 4.27 on the extent to which program content emphasized leadership for school improvement. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged 4.49 and the national comparison responses averaged 4.39. Response means in this table are on a five-point scale in which 1 equals “not at all” and 5 equals “to a great extent.”

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; *p<.05 and **p<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using $d=+/- .50$ as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Exhibit B-2: Principal perceptions of preservice content, 2014

To what extent were the following qualities/practices true of your formal leadership preparation training?	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2014	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (n=472)	Exemplary Program (N=242)		National Comparison (N=629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Program content emphasized instructional leadership	4.43	4.58**	-.20	4.13**	.39
b. Program content emphasized leadership for school improvement	4.38	4.49**	-.15	3.63**	.99
c. Program gave me a strong orientation to the principalship as a career	4.20	4.39**	-.23	3.73**	.57

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 4.43 on the extent to which program content emphasized instructional leadership. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged 4.58 and the national comparison responses averaged 4.13. Response means in this table are on a five-point scale in which 1 equals “not at all” and 5 equals “to a great extent.”

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; *p<.05 and **p<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using $d=+/- .50$ as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Exhibit B-3: Principal perceptions of preservice coursework, 2013

To what extent were the following leadership practices/instructional strategies part of your coursework in your leadership preparation training?	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2013	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (n=326)	Exemplary Program (N=242)		National Comparison (N=629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Analysis and discussion of case studies	3.96	4.39**	-.38	3.74**	.19
b. Analysis and discussion of field-based problems/problem-based learning approaches	3.94	4.29**	-.30	3.47**	.41
c. A portfolio demonstrating your learning and accomplishments	3.88	4.36**	-.38	2.81**	.84
d. Field-based projects in which you applied ideas in the field	3.84	4.22**	-.31	3.37**	.39
e. Action research or inquiry projects	3.66	4.00**	-.28	3.34**	.26

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 3.96 on to what extent analysis and discussion of case studies was a part of their coursework. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged a 4.39 and the national comparison responses averaged a 3.74. Response means in this table are on a five-point scale in which 1 equals “not at all” and 5 equals “to a great extent.”

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; *p<.05 and **p<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using $d=+/- .50$ as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2013; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Exhibit B-4: Principal perceptions of preservice coursework, 2014

To what extent were the following leadership practices/instructional strategies part of your coursework in your leadership preparation training?	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2014	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (n=472)	Exemplary Program (N=242)		National Comparison (N=629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Analysis and discussion of case studies	4.15	4.39**	-.25	3.74**	.42
b. Analysis and discussion of field-based problems/problem-based learning approaches	4.12	4.29**	-.18	3.47**	.67
c. A portfolio demonstrating your learning and accomplishments	3.98	4.36**	-.31	2.81**	.95
d. Field-based projects in which you applied ideas in the field	3.97	4.22**	-.23	3.37**	.55
e. Action research or inquiry projects	3.86	4.00**	-.12	3.34**	.46

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 4.15 on to what extent analysis and discussion of case studies was a part of their coursework. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged a 4.39 and the national comparison responses averaged a 3.74. Response means in this table are on a five-point scale in which 1 equals “not at all” and 5 equals “to a great extent.”

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; *p<.05 and **p<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using $d=+/- .50$ as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for “Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative,” 2014; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Exhibit B-5: Principal perceptions of their preparedness, 2013

How effectively did your leadership preparation training prepare you to do each of the following:	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2013	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (<i>n</i> =326)	Exemplary Program (<i>N</i> =242)		National Comparison (<i>N</i> =629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Engage in self-improvement and continuous learning	3.38	3.58**	-.28	2.91**	.64
b. Use data to monitor school progress, identify problems and propose solutions	3.18	3.31**	-.15	2.47**	.82
c. Create a collaborative learning organization	3.17	3.34**	-.22	2.69**	.63
d. Engage staff in a decision making process about school curriculum and policies	3.13	3.22*	-.11	2.70**	.52
e. Evaluate teachers and provide instructional feedback to support their improvement	3.10	3.36**	-.31	2.82**	.33
f. Lead a well-informed, planned change process for a school	3.10	3.22**	-.15	2.59**	.63
g. Engage in comprehensive planning for school improvement	3.09	3.22**	-.15	2.58**	.63
h. Create a coherent educational program across the school	2.96	3.22**	-.32	2.63**	.41
i. Redesign school organizations to enhance productive teaching and learning	2.92	3.06**	-.16	2.46**	.55
j. Design professional development that builds teachers' knowledge and skills	2.87	3.25**	-.44	2.50**	.42
k. Understand how different students learn and how to teach them successfully	2.70	3.03**	-.38	2.56**	.16
l. Evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness in supporting learning	2.56	2.92**	-.39	2.49	.08

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 3.38 on how prepared they were to engage in self-improvement and continuous learning. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged 3.58 and the national comparison responses averaged 2.91. Responses on this table are on a four-point scale in which 1 equals "not at all" and 4 equals "very well."

Note: Response means from the Darling-Hammond et al. survey were converted from a five-point scale to a four-point scale to allow for comparisons.

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; **p*<.05 and ***p*<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using *d*=+/- .50 as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2013; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Exhibit B-6: Principal perceptions of their preparedness, 2014					
How effectively did your leadership preparation training prepare you to do each of the following:	PPI Evaluation Surveys in 2014	Darling-Hammond et al. data reported in 2007			
	Principal (n=476)	Exemplary Program (N=242)		National Comparison (N=629)	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
a. Engage in self-improvement and continuous learning	3.36	3.58**	-.31	2.91**	.62
b. Create a collaborative learning organization	3.24	3.34**	-.12	2.69**	.71
c. Evaluate teachers and provide instructional feedback to support their improvement	3.24	3.36**	-.16	2.82**	.54
d. Use data to monitor school progress, identify problems and propose solutions	3.16	3.31**	-.18	2.47**	.83
e. Lead a well-informed, planned change process for a school	3.16	3.22	-.08	2.59**	.73
f. Engage in comprehensive planning for school improvement	3.14	3.22*	-.09	2.58**	.68
g. Engage staff in a decision making process about school curriculum and policies	3.11	3.22**	-.14	2.70**	.52
h. Create a coherent educational program across the school	3.05	3.22**	-.21	2.63**	.53
i. Design professional development that builds teachers' knowledge and skills	2.96	3.25**	-.32	2.50**	.51
j. Redesign school organizations to enhance productive teaching and learning	2.93	3.06**	-.15	2.46**	.58
k. Understand how different students learn and how to teach them successfully	2.75	3.03**	-.32	2.56**	.22
l. Evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness in supporting learning	2.67	2.92**	-.28	2.49**	.20

Exhibit reads: Principal responses averaged 3.36 on how prepared they were to engage in self-improvement and continuous learning. Darling-Hammond et al. exemplary programs responses averaged 3.58 and the national comparison responses averaged 2.91. Responses on this table are on a four-point scale in which 1 equals "not at all" and 4 equals "very well."

Note: Response means from the Darling-Hammond et al. survey were converted from a five-point scale to a four-point scale to allow for comparisons.

Note: T-tests were conducted to determine statistical significance; *p<.05 and **p<.01. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d*. We suggest interpreting effect sizes using $d = +/- .50$ as a minimum threshold for interpreting results as having at least a moderate effect.

Source: Principal Survey for "Evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative," 2014; Principal surveys reported in Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

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