



What Do We Know About Principal Preparation, Licensure Requirements, and Professional Development for School Leaders?

CEELO POLICY REPORT

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Abstract: CEELO reviewed data on 21 states' principal licensure requirements, conducted structured interviews with experts on principal preparation and professional development in 7 states, and spoke with staff at the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Institute for School Leadership.

Our research reveals an array of administrator licensure titles assigned to grade-level authority across states, some permitting principals or administrators the flexibility to oversee programs ranging from early childhood through high school. To date, only Illinois has included early childhood content specifically in their licensure and accreditation processes.¹ Early childhood content is not a required element of principal preparation or professional development for principals in most states, according to our findings. Very few states have any formal requirement for early childhood content in licensure for principals responsible for early education programs. Some states have developed policies and programs that acknowledge a need for integrating early childhood content (DE, IL, MD, NJ, PA, WA), but very few have progressed beyond initial stages of providing training or outlining policies.

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Introduction

Principal leadership is second only to teaching in terms of impact on child outcomes.ⁱⁱ Strong leadership has a positive impact on schools facing challenging circumstances, such as poverty, high teacher turnover, and limited resources. Specific features of schools (such as location, school, and district size) also affect strong leadership. Additional research, however, is needed to determine exactly how leadership preparation and licensure affects principals' knowledge and support for early childhood education. Although preschool classrooms are often part of primary schools, many principals do not have any formal training or professional development in early childhood education. As a result, these leaders may not have the knowledge base and skills needed to effectively provide instructional leadership and supervision for early childhood teachers.

The National Governor's Association (NGA), the National Council of School Leaders (NCSL), and the Wallace Foundation recently conducted studies on the importance of preparing principals for today's challenges. The NGA reported the following finding:ⁱⁱⁱ

Most states' principal preparation systems could be improved to better equip elementary school principals to evaluate pre-K through third-grade (P-3) teachers, support improvements in teaching and learning, and guide teachers in using curricula and assessments in the earliest grades. Recent state policy developments to expand state-funded pre-K education and reform teacher evaluation have increased the urgency for these policy changes.

The Wallace Foundation reported that [administrators] "welcome the opportunity to align all parts of the pipeline—including principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support—around standards and competencies," but note that planning and preparation programs must be tailored to the needs of individual districts, striking a balance between autonomy and accountability.^{iv} Our review of state policies found, however, that preschool and even kindergarten classrooms may not be considered in any part of that pipeline.

NCSL reports that "Today, nearly all states have adopted some form of what's known as the ISLLC standards, which lay out a set of competencies school leaders need to succeed in improving instruction."^v Yet neither the standards, nor the states—except Illinois—have included early childhood content specifically in their licensure, accreditation, mentoring or evaluation processes. Early childhood content is not part of principal preparation or professional development for principals in most states, according to our findings.

This brief explores the present status of principal preparation and licensure; the findings emphasize the urgency to enhance the capacity of principals to value high quality early childhood programs and provide effective instructional leadership for early learning and teaching.

- Among states there is little attention to specific licensure policies and requirements, and only isolated pockets (in some states) of deep work, on early childhood issues for some groups of principals.

- Leadership programs and training on early childhood content appear to be intended (when offered) primarily for principals already licensed and in practice, and may be offered only to public school principals or only to preschool administrators who are not principals.
- Many states do not include higher education faculty in conversations regarding preparation and licensure, which would help make the system—from principal preparation, through licensure, to professional development—seamless.
- New teacher evaluation systems developed by states commonly address grades one through twelve, and may omit preschool and Kindergarten entirely. Until the impact of Kindergarten and pre-K on third grade and other outcomes is clearly understood by administrators, the opportunity to train principals about early learning classrooms is an opportunity missed. Kostelnik and Grady discuss the implications of this on child learning and outcomes in *Getting it Right from the Start: A Principal's Guide to Early Childhood Education*.

The NGA study specifically addresses four education policy reforms that support the need for early childhood program knowledge for administrators: Common Core State Standards, third grade literacy assessments, teacher evaluation requirements, and kindergarten readiness assessments. State educators raised these policy issues often. State leaders indicate that, due to limited resources, early childhood content training for principals must be linked to these policy reforms in order to be included. The NGA report also notes that implementing birth through third grade learning standards involves extensive human capital, from teachers and others in leadership positions, such as principals. A requirement to use birth through third grade assessments, for example, may be implemented relatively quickly, but time and resources are necessary to ensure best practices are shared and understood by all stakeholders.

The NCSL report describes ways to improve aspects of principal licensure and retention, including aligning all aspects of principal preparation, not just focusing on one at a time, and assigning state task forces to closely examine the principal preparation process.^{vi} The Wallace Foundation (2013) reported that administrators may welcome alignment of principal hiring, preparation, ongoing support, and education, but that individual districts have distinct needs that must be accommodated during planning and preparation.^{vii}

Many states have adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards^{viii} outlining competencies for the preparation and professional development of school leaders. These standards are an important foundation for embedding specific early childhood content, pedagogy, and practice in licensing requirements and professional development models. The ISLLC standards are often aligned to professional practice frameworks in teacher and principal evaluation systems so they represent an opportunity to provide some coherence to the leadership needed to implement critical policy reforms affecting pre-K through third grade.

Methodology

This research addressed the following questions:

- Which states currently include pre-k in the scope of principal licensure? For states that do include pre-k, what policy levers or mechanisms do they use (e.g. do early childhood teaching degrees and experience count toward licensure? Is early childhood content included on the licensure exam?)
- Are there promising pre-service or in-service training models in other states and communities to support elementary school principals in gaining early education expertise?
- What can state policymakers learn from these models?

Initially, CEELO examined the licensing requirements for states licensing administrators from pre-K through twelfth grade, to determine whether specific early childhood content or experience requirements related to pre-K were required. The requirements for licensing, including certification and endorsement, were examined for any mention of pre-K—either as relevant experience toward licensure or as a content area required for licensure.

Davis, in a 2010 paper analyzing licensure requirements across the country, reported that: “Only eight (16%) states (including California) require a single license to certify employment for all pre-K-12 administrative positions (CA, DE, FL, NE, NV, NM, OR, UT).”^{ix} CEELO began by investigating licensure in these eight states. Then, states were added if they included an elementary endorsement in the licensure, as this was thought to enhance the chance that early childhood would be considered in training and licensure plans and in content requirements of preparation programs. Preparation programs in this case were broadly defined, including outlines for university programs for teachers, leadership workshops or programs, and any other defined paths identified by states.

Other states were added as they were cited by other sources for including early childhood content or language in licensing or preparation plans, to develop a database of 21 states, exploring which states required any content, pedagogy, or practice/internship related to pre-K in licensing requirements. The 21 states reviewed are: AR, AZ, CA, DC, DE, FL, IL, MA, MD, ME, MN, NE, NJ, NM, NV, OR, PA, SD, UT, VA, and WA.

After examining whether specific early childhood content or experience requirements for licensure were addressed for *preparing* principals to serve; CEELO examined whether there were *ongoing* professional development requirements for administrators specifically related to early childhood or developmentally appropriate practice for young children.

CEELO conducted structured interviews with educators involved in principal preparation or professional development in seven states: CT, DE, MA, MD, NC, NJ, and WA. (See **Appendix A** for the interview protocol). These states were chosen because they had engaged in initiatives to enhance early childhood training for principals; or for developing leadership academies including or focusing on early childhood components. CEELO collected resources from many state informants, related to their training and

leadership development programs, and interviewed representatives from two leadership programs engaged in preparing and training principals. Best practices for initial and deeper leadership training in early childhood education were explored during detailed interviews, and are discussed below.

Findings

Licensure

Only one state, Illinois, specifically includes early childhood content in its licensure requirements.^x Although many states include pre-K in the scope of principal licensure (pre-K-12, for example) the extent to which that involves any childhood content or experience is varied, but generally extremely limited. We found the following:

- In Arizona,^{xi} Arkansas,^{xii} and DC,^{xiii} for example, pre-K teaching experience can be used to qualify for administrator licensure, but it is not a requirement.
- Delaware,^{xiv} New Mexico,^{xv} New Jersey,^{xvi} Oregon,^{xvii} and South Dakota^{xviii} outline no specific early childhood content or experience for licensing.
- In Nebraska,^{xix} pre-K is included in principal licensure renewal—but state website sources do not indicate clearly whether it is required for initial licensure.
- Virginia^{xx} offers various routes to a pre-K -12 endorsement for an administration and supervision license, but no specific experience or content related to pre-K is specified in licensure regulations.

Very few states among those CEELo examined appear to have included early childhood content in principal preparation policies. As part of 2009 legislation, Illinois did include early childhood pedagogy and field experiences in preparation programs for principal licensure.^{xxi}

In Illinois, leaders from P-12 schools, colleges and universities, business organizations, professional education organizations, the State Board of Education, and the Board of Higher Education were involved in redesigning principal licensure.^{xxii} Within a principal certification program, it is now possible to earn an early childhood (B-3) endorsement, which certifies that the school leader is a knowledgeable early childhood principal. This endorsement, however, is not required.

Many states include an acknowledgement of preschool and early childhood grades within their principal licensures, but do not include any early-childhood-specific training or professional development. Davis^{xxiii} reported that only seven (14%) states require a specific endorsement for administrative service in an elementary school (MA, ME, MN, MO, ND, RI, SC). In examining principal licensure issues (not related specifically to preschool content) he determined:

- *The ease of public access to important licensure data varies widely from state to state. In some states . . . the search for comprehensive licensure criteria required a combined review of SDE, education code, and university program documents. (For this report, for example, public access to WA licensure requirements was not available.)*

- *In no instance was documentation found that provided a clear articulation of the state’s rationale, purpose, or philosophy regarding administrative licensure. Moreover, licensure policies across the 50 states are generally not directly aligned with well-developed theoretical or conceptual frameworks for leadership development or evaluation, nor clearly aligned with standards for administrative practice*
- *State administrator licensure is generally summative. . . . its primary function appears to be in providing public assurance of minimal professional competency.*
- *Assessments of professional competence or organizational outcomes are rarely used to determine . . . eligibility for advanced licensure.*

CEELO’s experience of examining state licensure information, as summarized in the database constructed for this purpose, indicates that this is still common practice.

A Commission Report by Levine^{xxiv}, *Educating School Leaders*, delineates reasons for this lack of comprehensive and cohesive requirements for principal licensure. The Commission was developed to “consider and evaluate the findings and recommendations of Educating School Leaders, to focus “preparation programs on improving and sustaining P-12, and to revamp the assessment system to determine if candidates demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the *needs of P-12 schools* and to improve student learning.”

The Commission found that:

- “Technical courses” seemed to make up the core curriculum for most principal preparation programs, however, only 63 percent of principals found coursework to be helpful and only 56 percent indicated that the coursework was high quality.
- Courses are “little more than a grab bag of survey courses”
- “The quality of the courses was generally rated lower than their value.”
- There may be issues with content alignment across and between programs within and across states.
- There is a lack of engagement between faculty members and P-12 schools, which often creates significant disparities between what is taught in the classroom and what occurs in the field. For instance, at many research universities, scholarly research in the field is valued more than service in the schools. This often results in disconnect between what is taught in the classroom versus the needs of school teachers and administrators.

The NGA concludes that “Most states’ principal preparation systems could be improved to better equip elementary school principals to evaluate pre-K through third-grade (P–3) teachers, support improvements in teaching and learning, and guide teachers in using curricula and assessments in the earliest grades. Recent state policy developments to expand state-funded pre-K education and reform teacher evaluation have increased the urgency for these policy changes.”^{xxv}

They suggest that states:

- Redefine what elementary school principals should know and be able to do through improved state leader standards and licensure requirements
 - Expand the scope of school leader licensure to include pre-K
 - Embed early childhood education content throughout the principal licensure process
 - Add early education content to the licensure exam
- Require principal preparation programs to embed content on pre-K through third grade pedagogy
- Support professional development opportunities for existing principals on promoting high-quality pre-K through third grade Instruction

Yet they have not, apparently, increased the focus of states on developing these systems, except in isolated cases as described below.

Ongoing Professional Development

Leadership recruitment, preparation, and ongoing professional development represent a range of learning and professional development along a continuum of professional practice. This CEELo report begins with preparation, but there are other opportunities along the continuum for states to enhance and deepen principal understanding of early childhood content. Although there are opportunities, there are also challenges to implementing new programs and practices.

The review of state processes, including interviews with stakeholders, and examination of past studies and research, indicates that a broad collaboration of participants is necessary to support ongoing change in licensure and accreditation policies. When resources, such as time and money, are limited, states (and individual stakeholders) may not be eager to change existing requirements and regulations, especially if they are unclear on the potential benefits of doing so. For example, staff interviewed in the Virginia Department of Education reported that (as in many states) there is no budget for professional development for school administrators. While the administrator standards have been reformulated to include pre-K in a pre-K through twelfth grade credential, no specific competencies were required to ensure that every administrator would have core training and experience in the pre-K through third grade range. Any work focusing on professional development for principals around pre-K through third grade may come from ASCD or a principal association, but it is not widespread, and certainly not embedded in policy.

Unless states already have early childhood professionals integrated into their state departments of education, they may not see a clear need to include early childhood experts, even if some elementary schools are providing preschool services within the school or within their districts. There are no data indicating how many schools include preschool classrooms currently, although numbers are clearly increasing. Professional development in the state tends to be focused on teachers, not administrators, as teacher evaluation is a key policy topic currently. State educators interviewed for this report agree that principal knowledge of early childhood content would be helpful in the teacher evaluation process, but that there is no capacity for that at this time in most states, and no clear plans to develop it.

Pre-Service and In-Service Training Models

High quality professional development on pre-K through third grade issues is seldom available beyond the workshop level for principals and other school administrators in their own states. As a result, some professionals have looked out of state to develop their own leadership skills in this area. In this report, we considered principal preparation and related requirements offered by schools or districts; leadership efforts for preschool administrators who were not school principals were outside the scope of this work, although some states did discuss related programs. We interviewed selected stakeholders to learn more about their practices.

Harvard PreK-3rd Grade Institutes

Recognizing that “the years between pre-kindergarten and third grade are vital to creating the foundation for later school success” and the “increasing evidence that high quality curricula and instruction, data-driven improvement, and instructional leadership . . . creates and sustains a supportive environment for young learners . . . central to effective reforms,” the Harvard University Graduate School of Education (HGSE) provides a model for pre-K through third grade leadership. Designed for team attendance, the Institutes focuses on providing a rich grounding in leading-edge research and practice related to pre-K through third grade approaches. Teams are also given practical tools and time to design implementation plans that are used when they return “home.”

These four-day Institutes, held most recently in 2012, convene teams of educators and administrators from across the country at the state, district, school, and community level, who are actively collaborating to implement a comprehensive pre-K through third grade approach. Attendees include superintendents, central office administrators, elementary school principals, leaders from school- and community-based birth-to-age-five programs, classroom teachers, philanthropic leaders, state agency leaders, and others. The cross-district and cross-state sharing is a cornerstone of the Institute’s design. The Institutes are led by a team of HGSE faculty including Drs. Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Richard Weissbourd, Stephanie Jones, and Nonie Lesaux.

National experts present on relevant topics covering the pre-K through third grade continuum and engage directly with participants in team planning sessions. The Institutes’ intentional focus on “How to do pre-K-3rd grade” led to the development of the *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*,^{xxvi} co-authored by Kristie Kauerz (Harvard Graduate School of Education and University of Washington) and Julia Coffman (Center for Evaluation Innovation).

The Harvard PreK-3rd Grade Institutes are not designed to formally align with state elementary principal licensure requirements, nor offered as a credit-bearing course. Participants receive a certificate of completion and letter confirming the hours of participation.

The National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)

NISL is described in detail in the Pennsylvania section below. NISL retains ownership of its model NISL Early Childhood Executive Leadership Institute (ECELI) which can be tailored to any state's effort to support what elementary principals need to know to be effective leaders and change agents for seamless system pre-K through third grade reform. Content focuses on child development, early learning strategies, the cross sector landscape of pre-K through third grade, family engagement, and strategic planning skills. The \$35,000 fee covers full institute costs for up to 25 participants; two trained facilitators (one with early childhood expertise, the other with K-12 leadership experience); online and in-person coaching; and materials. Institutes are typically scheduled for three consecutive days, followed by several months to permit action research in participants' districts, before concluding with two consecutive days of supplemental professional development and peer learning. NISL has provided the ECELI for several cohorts in Mississippi and other states have expressed interest.

State-Based Programs

Connecticut

Program: Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood has brokered an arrangement with the University of Connecticut to replicate the University of Washington's pre-K through third grade Executive Leadership Certificate model for leaders in Connecticut next year. Connecticut's "3 to 3 Institute" is a collaborative effort between the state's new Office of Early Childhood (effective 2013, the Office of Early Childhood became a stand-alone agency separate from the Department of Education) and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the state principals' association, which has taken an active interest in supporting professional development for career principals and other school leaders in jointly sponsored "Getting Pre-K to Grade Three Right" symposia.

Participants: The first cohort of community teams was selected through a competitive application process, and completed the program in 2013. Teams intentionally included principals, superintendents, curriculum directors, early childhood administrators/directors, kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers, and literacy coaches, to bridge the birth to age five and Kindergarten through third grade systems thinking, focusing on shrinking the achievement gap.

Activities: A full-day symposium featured national experts addressing early language and literacy, mathematics, and executive function within a continuous pre-K through third grade framework, before breaking into teams. Each team was assigned a facilitator to work with throughout the year to develop and implement an actionable team plan. Facilitators were often former principals who had received executive coach training through CAS.

Support: The symposium with follow-up facilitation was made possible through philanthropic support. A grant from the National Governors Association will help them continue for a second cohort. A second leadership team symposium was held in January 2014. Kristie Kauerz presented the *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*.^{xxvii}

Delaware

Program: In 2000, Governor Carper signed into law the Educator Accountability law, in which Delaware adopted a new licensure, certification, and evaluation system for teachers, and reduced 37 different school leader certificate designations to three administrative certificates: Assistant Principal/Principal; School Leader I (District Office Directors, Specialists, Administrative Assistants); and School Leader II (Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent).

Participants: Teachers are required to have a birth through Kindergarten or other early education certificate if they teach in an early education classroom. Principals and assistant principals are not required to have an early childhood certificate or take additional coursework, even though they may be responsible for administering pre-K programs in their building and evaluating pre-K teachers.

Activities: To support professional development for school leaders, the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL), at the University of Delaware's (UD) College of Education and Human Development, has developed several programs. **The Aspiring Leaders Program (ALP)** assists participants in acquiring essential skills and knowledge for managing and leading schools, with a focus on school improvement and student achievement. Based on research and best practices in school leadership, the curriculum is aligned to national *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISLLC) standards.

ALP meets one afternoon/evening a month, featuring a different element of school leadership: leadership style; leadership behaviors; administrative services (nutrition, transportation, facilities, budget, and finance); management and instructional leadership; communication; legal issues; governance, policy and procedures, and protocol; resume writing and interviews; and leadership assessment. Participants identify "problems of practice" to research and address, and work with self-identified school or district mentors to provide support, through the duration of the program. DASL staff members also provide ongoing support to participants and their mentors. Although many participants who engage in this professional development program will assume responsibility as principals in elementary schools with pre-K responsibilities, the program does not formally address pre-K through third grade in its design.

In partnership with UD's Institute for Public Administration, DASL designed the **Executive Leadership Academy**, six sessions addressing strategic planning, instructional leadership, legal issues, school finances, collective bargaining, school construction, board of education governance, and understanding leadership styles. Participants also identify, research, and complete a "Problem of Practice" action plan as part of the program. As with other DASL programs, pre-K through third grade issues are not specifically incorporated into the content; they are incidental issues based on the interests and needs of participants.

Despite the absence of planned pre-K through third grade content in DASL's programs, Director Jacquelyn Wilson believes that principals need a strong understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, and the state can improve its policies and programs to prepare principals for early childhood. As she observed, "One doesn't necessarily learn how to best teach young children by taking school finance and law." Wilson reports that the proposed course of study that DASL has submitted to the

Professional Standards Board for approval, which would lead to Principal/Assistant Principal certification, will include an optional module focused on preparing school leaders in Early Learning environments.

Illinois

Program: Illinois has been recognized for its transformative policy-driven pre-K through third grade approach to improve principal effectiveness for early education, as described in detail above.^{xxviii} As implementation catches up with policy, and higher education in the state revamps its principal licensure programs, elementary principals will be assured of a strong foundation of knowledge and experience to effectively lead early learning programs.

Maryland

Program: The Maryland Department of Education (DOE) used some of their Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge award to develop an **Early Childhood Leadership Academy**. Noting that there are no certification requirements for elementary principals to have early education experience or knowledge, the Maryland Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development, sought to emphasize the importance of the early years and help leaders look beyond their current knowledge and responsibilities. The first academy was held during the summer of 2013, with plans to repeat in summer 2014, with plans to schedule academies three times annually, in regional locations.

Participants: Principals from each school system in the state were invited to form collaborative teams, including two additional members from their school; and three representatives from Head Start, child care, family members or family child care. Perhaps a symptom of the need for such an event, one respondent noted that principals without pre-K programs in their buildings had difficulty attracting non-school team members, despite there being no cost to the school or participants.

Activities: In the morning of the one-day event, teams focused on executive functioning and Maryland EXCELS, the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Teams spent the afternoon engaged in facilitated short- and long-term action planning. The academy did not address pre-K through third grade as a comprehensive issue; rather, it attempted to expand relationships and understanding of a broader context and continuum, ultimately resulting in greater incorporation of pre-K through third grade into school improvement plans.

Support: The Maryland Department of Education (DOE) used some of their Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge award to develop the Academy.

Maryland DOE also makes a concerted effort to include pre-K through third grade topics in conferences held by other organizations, including the Maryland Association of Elementary Principals; Maryland Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); and Common Ground, a consortium of higher education institutions. As Maryland completes work on its kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) and a pre-K through third grade pedagogy guide that can be used by principals as a resource, opportunities to embed pre-K through third grade in continuing education for elementary principals will strengthen.

Massachusetts

Program: Massachusetts was a forerunner in providing early childhood education professional development for principals. Recognizing that principals with pre-K and kindergarten responsibilities were often isolated within their school systems and lacked deep knowledge about early education, the state supported the development of the CAYL Institute of Cambridge, MA. The institute built upon a pre-existing fellowship program supported by the Schott Foundation in 2004 to develop leadership among those involved in early education policy, including those in government, higher education, philanthropy, public education, and directors of early care and education programs. By 2006, the CAYL Institute recognized the need to focus more on principals and created the CAYL Principals Fellowship Program.

Participants: The CAYL Principals Fellowship was established to “create a learning community for elementary school principals to strengthen their individual and collective capacity to lead efforts to integrate pre-kindergarten (pre-K) children into their schools and to influence district and state level policies that affect the education of young children.” The intensive year-long learning experience was offered initially only to principals in the Boston Public Schools system, then opened to principals throughout the state when the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) replaced expiring private funding. Later, the Institute was reconfigured to attract community teams involving principals with administrators from Head Start and child care.

Simultaneously, the CAYL Institute established a Principals Fellowship Program in Ohio, operating in the economically distressed counties of Trumbull and Mahoning with support from the Wean Foundation. By the time CAYL Institute’s National Conference for Elementary School Principals was held in July 2010, principals from Ohio, Massachusetts, Texas, Delaware, Virginia, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, and Maryland attended, underscoring the need and interest in supporting early education expertise for principals.

Activities: The goals of the CAYL Principal Fellowship Program are to:

- Create a peer learning network; championing policy changes at the local, district and state levels
- Establish a high-quality pre-K learning environments within school systems
- Promote family involvement and cultural competence as a key to successful early education in the schools.

As described by a CAYL leader, “[Because] principals with an early childhood component may be in the minority, it’s important for them to be able to connect with others who understand the challenges and opportunities.” The format of the CAYL Principals Fellowship Program evolved over time in response to principals’ needs. Originally developed as a two-week summer institute, the Institute most recently provided a four-day summer institute supplemented with periodic Saturday seminars from national experts and previous Fellows, work-embedded assignments, field visits, and peer- and mentor-supported practice and observation throughout the year. When the school year begins, principals work closely with consultant-coaches in their schools and communities to integrate principles learned during the summer institute. CAYL also provides pre-work activities to participants in advance of their initial Saturday meeting so that each team arrives with identifiable goals and action plan ideas for the year. In

addition, Fellows are expected to meet in their community teams at least once in-between all other scheduled meetings and online technical assistance from CAYL is available throughout the year.

CAYL also produced a series of Toolkits, which are integral resources for Fellows participating in the Institute. They include:

- **Principals' Toolkit:** Addresses five content areas with promising practices for principals to support developmentally appropriate learning for young children: Vision, Practice and Pedagogy, Supervision, Family and Community, and Policy Perspectives.
- **The Educators Toolkit:** A Partnership Toolkit for Early Education: The CAYL Institute encourages educators to build strong partnerships with other community programs and resources. The video and workbook explain why, examine the challenges of developing partnerships, and offers strategies to accomplish this goal. Reference and resource materials are provided to extend learning and implementation. Practical examples and the voice of educators' colleagues are evident throughout this toolkit.
- **The Architects of Change Toolkit:** Building on the Principals and Educators Toolkits, this video and workbook looks at how to create a shared vision and knowledge base in order to construct collective strategies that will result in sustainable change for young children. In addition to practical reference and resource materials, this toolkit provides insights from experts and practitioners in the field.

The program concludes with Fellows sharing their experiences, projects, and action plans designed for implementation in the very near future.

New Jersey

Program: A single, non-grade-specific administrator license is issued to principals in New Jersey who have a Masters degree; pass a competency examination; and have at least five years teaching experience, regardless of their placement in an elementary school or high school. Elementary principals, many of whom have administrative responsibilities for pre-K programs operating in their building or in community-based settings, are not required to have a background in early education. Since there is no specific requirement to include early education or pre-K through third grade in higher education coursework, a principal's familiarity with pre-K through third grade may depend on which institution of higher education program s/he attended and courses offered.

In 2009, the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE), New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (NJASCD), and Advocates for Children in New Jersey (ACNJ), with support from the Foundation for Child Development (FCD), offered professional development opportunities to district teams, by developing the **PreK-3rd Grade Leadership Training Series** for administrators with preschool responsibilities, recognizing the critical role school administrators play in bridging early childhood and primary education.

Participants: Rice and Costanza explain, "This partnership presented a 'united front' of PreK-3rd experts and provided a level of credibility that would have not existed without this collaboration."^{xxix} While not

designed expressly for elementary principals, the series included them as a primary audience, with the understanding that many principals were contending with new issues such as early learning standards, developmentally appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. More than 200 elementary principals participated, developing a foundation to better address more recent issues of early learning standards alignment with the Common Core, student assessment, and teacher and principal evaluation.

Activities: The “PreK-3rd Grade Leadership Training Series,” a four-day series of sessions over a five-month period, centered around nine components of the pre-K through third grade system framework developed by Kauerz and colleagues. Components included:

- Access to programs
- Teacher/teaching quality
- Program quality
- Leader quality
- Standards addressing all developmental domains
- Child-based assessments
- Transitions
- Infrastructure
- Family and community engagement

The series was tailored to interests and needs of participants, through a flexible syllabus, while retaining core concepts of a pre-K through third grade approach. Each session included presentations by experts, hands-on workshops, and a small-group workshop. Professional development credit was available. A detailed description of the program and assessment of its results is available [online](#).

Support: The initial program was supported by the Foundation for Child Development (FCD). During years two and three of the FCD funding, an “advanced” course was also offered, for those who completed the original professional development but wanted additional training.

Program: After the FCD grant ended, the focus shifted to include district teams. The **New Jersey Early Childhood Academy (ECA)** is designed as a continuous improvement approach for the state’s school districts. The Division of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education is partnering with The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)’s Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) at Rutgers University, to continue to build communities of practice among New Jersey school district leaders. The ECA is focusing more specifically on issues related to teacher evaluation and implementing Common Core State Standards.

Participants: Select districts in the state were invited to send a team including at least a principal, teacher, and central office administrator.

Activities: ECA incorporated a year-long, three-session academy, focusing on coherence of preschool expansion and quality, teacher evaluation, and Common Core State Standards implementation in early childhood. Formal presentations by local experts were followed with small-group discussion, the teams

develop district-focused “evidence documents” or action plans. Additional homework and online programs supplement learning between sessions.

Support: Eight districts contributed funds to send a team of three (up to six members could participate per district, for an additional cost per person). Including this past year, about 400 school administrators have participated in the program. A third-round grantee of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, New Jersey plans to continue the academy as a two-year program for districts, with the second year emphasizing the use of data in a continuous improvement process. First year teams will serve as mentors for subsequent cohorts enrolling the following year.

North Carolina

Program: Teacher evaluation became a motivating factor to enhance principals’ understanding of early childhood education in North Carolina. Prior to the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process (NCTEP) taking effect in 2010-2012, the State Board of Education approved a statewide performance evaluation system using the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument-Revised (TPAI-R) in response to legislative requirements. Concern over the inappropriate measurement criteria for teachers in the early years, particularly in More at Four state pre-K program and kindergarten classrooms, had been expressed. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Office of Early Learning and University of North Carolina–Charlotte (UNCC) collaborated to obtain information from the field about administrators’ understanding of early education and design a pre-K/K version that was approved in 2008.

Leadership from several offices in DPI—Division of Educator Recruitment and Development, Office of Professional Development, and Office of Early Learning/Teacher Licensure Unit—recognized a continuing need for principals to increase their understanding of early childhood education. Teaming with the Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation at UNCC, the DPI developed the **Resource Manual for Administrators and Principals Supervising and Evaluating Teachers of Young Children**^{xxx} in 2010 to support NCTEP. Although elementary principals in North Carolina are not required to have had experience or demonstrate competence in early childhood per se, the resource guide serves as a valuable tool. It is also an indispensable resource for the **Beginning Teacher Support Program**, which is a required multi-year program that includes mentorship, professional development plan support, and formative and summative evaluation aligned with the teacher licensure progression.

This manual provides key elements to enhance principal understanding that extends beyond the evaluation process. An overview of key principles of early childhood education helps distinguish beliefs and practices from those necessary to educate older students. The resources section provides a comprehensive list of relevant documents and links to materials on standards, curriculum, assessment, and professional organizations. Essential for guiding the appropriate assessment of teacher performance by principals and administrators, the majority of the manual identifies sample teacher behaviors, child behaviors, classroom conditions, and artifacts that help illustrate standards and elements for early childhood classrooms. Sample observation and evaluation rubrics tied to NC’s five teacher licensure standards provide principals with a tool for valid and reliable evaluation of pre-K and Kindergarten educators.

Participants: Training had been provided to every school system in the state by DPI and UNCC to enhance use of the manual.

Activities: Phase one involves a full-day training during the work-week to introduce the Manual and indicators of quality practices. The second phase involves participants taking what was learned back to their districts and programs, and applying it through program and educator observations. After a period of a month or so, the final phase of the program assembles participants to share their findings, address questions and concerns, and provide additional resources.

Support: When administration of the More at Four Program shifted from DPI to the Division of Child Development and Early Education in the Department of Health and Human Services, training also shifted to the new agency. Although the program is open to principals, most participants are from Head Start and Child Care, possibly due to this shift in agency. Also, North Carolina has dedicated funds from its Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge award to develop a **Directors' Leadership Academy**, but the target audience is directors of pre-K and child care programs, rather than elementary principals.

Pennsylvania

Program: In Pennsylvania, legislation redefined the state's approach to the public education professional development process. Although not the target, early education benefited. Act 48 of 1999 stipulated that persons holding professional educator certification were required to complete continuing education requirements every five years to maintain active certification status. In 2007, Act 45 was enacted, to require school administrators to obtain Act 45 professional development requirements addressing the nine Pennsylvania Leadership Standards (three Core and six Corollary Standards), through courses and programs approved by the Department of Education (DOE). DOE partnered with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) to create the **Pennsylvania Inspired Leader (PIL)** program. PIL is a statewide, standards-based, continuing education program for school administrators, offered in eight regional sites. Early education is not infused into PIL content currently, although state leaders have signaled an interest in "back-mapping" coursework to include pre-K.

With a unique administrative structure linking the Departments of Education and Public Welfare through a dually appointed Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) worked closely with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) to establish the **Pennsylvania Early Childhood Executive Leadership Institute (PA ECELI)**. OCDEL developed the model in partnership with NISL in 2009, as an adaptation of NISL's Executive Leadership Institute for K-12 leaders, taking advantage of Pennsylvania's legislation concerning professional preparation and continuing education and a regional structure for professional development, through the PA Keys. More than 300 principals have completed PA ECELI through 2013.

Participants: Currently in its fifth year, PA ECELI is a five-day program designed for elementary principals and early education directors to come together in support of a continuous, aligned, pre-K through third grade system. Delivered regionally, the program has generated new interest among principals, since they are facing new accountability reforms, such as kindergarten entry assessment, third-grade reading

requirements, and teacher evaluation. Principals acquire Act 45 (PA Inspired Leadership Initiative) credit for their successful participation.

Activities: Participants gather for three consecutive days (generally in summer), followed by a two-day session with a minimum of one month in between (a 2-2-1 schedule is also possible). Day one addresses child development through a “whole child” lens, using a case study based on a rural Pennsylvania town and program design based on the six components of the Standards Aligned System (SAS) to support student achievement. Curriculum for the second day covers the alignment of pre-K and kindergarten standards and assessments, in addition to developing a participant-designed action research project called the Action Learning Project (ALP). Topics covered on the third day include multigenerational engagement; family, school and community involvement; and continuity and transition planning. The break between sessions encourages participants to engage and re-examine pre-K through third grade in their roles within programs and communities. When they reconvene, day four of PA ECELI provides the opportunity for peer sharing and reflection on participants’ ALP efforts, using the eight-step Kotter Change Process^{xxxii} adapted for early childhood. The program concludes by examining issues of leadership and sustainability. NISL-trained facilitators work with participants individually as well as in teams.

Support: OCDEL and DOE provide funding for the program; there is no cost to participants, other than travel.

Washington

Program: In Washington, the University of Washington’s College of Education offers a Certificate in **Pre-K-3rd grade Executive Leadership (P3EL)** program in response to increased interest on the local level, spurred in large part by sustained investment in local school districts and communities by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Inspired by P3EL co-directors’ (Drs. Kristie Kauerz and Gail Joseph) shared experience in Colorado with the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Certificate program for birth-through-age five teachers and administrators, this Washington-based leadership program broadens the age focus to include the birth-through-third-grade continuum, but narrows the audience by focusing explicitly on site-based administrators (elementary principals and birth through age five directors). The ultimate goal is to provide a common professional education experience for administrators in the birth through age five and K-12 systems.

Participants: P3EL annually enrolls a 50-person cohort equally representing elementary school principals and administrators of Head Start, child care, and state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) pre-K programs to bridge traditionally separate birth through age five and K-12 sectors. Selective enrollment is determined following a competitive application process, which requires approval from the applicant’s supervisor. In addition to its co-directors, P3EL has an esteemed advisory board of state and national PK-3rd grade leaders.

Activities: The curriculum for the 11-month course of study was informed by a series of focus groups held throughout the state during P3EL planning and is aligned with the *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*.^{xxxii} The Leadership Institute brings a timely

focus to supporting pre-K through third grade administrators in their efforts to implement current policy reforms that span the pre-K through third grade continuum in Washington including Early Achievers quality rating and improvement system (QRIS); Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) kindergarten entry assessment; aligning the Early Learning and Development Guidelines with the Common Core State Standards; and teacher/principal evaluation. To address these issues and their alignment with developmentally appropriate practice, P3EL coursework is built upon three pillars:

- Pedagogical Leadership (curriculum, learning environments, intentional teaching, using child assessment data);
- Equity-driven Leadership (diverse learners, child development and learning, family and community engagement); and
- Pre-K through third grade Policy, Advocacy, and Strategic Leadership (P–3 organizational change, state and federal policies).

The program is delivered in an executive-style format combining a one-week residency, four weekend class sessions at the UW–Seattle campus, webinars, and regional meetings. Participants have the option of earning nine academic credits at UW or 9 continuing education units (CEUs). An optional three credits are available for participants completing an action research project in their community. The Washington Department of Early Learning approved the coursework for MERIT/STARS professional registry. UW plans to apply to the state’s Professional Educator Standards Board to be an approved program for school principals’ required recertification once the Institute has been successfully implemented for at least two years. The first cohort begins its study in February 2014.

UW recently announced the establishment of a national pre-K through third grade center whose initiatives include this Executive Leadership Institute for principals and birth to age five administrators, a national academy for local teams modeled after Harvard’s PreK-3rd Grade institutes, intensive technical assistance to states and districts around the country, and implementation-driven evaluation research.

Policy Recommendations and Next Steps for State Policy Makers

Principal licensure in most states may acknowledge pre-K as part of the educational system, but rarely requires knowledge of pre-K content, or field experience in pre-K. Few states are even considering adding pre-K to licensure or professional development programs, partly because resources are scarce, and because efforts to develop effective programs are time-consuming and challenging. Yet it is critical to provide such training and preparation to aspiring principals and administrators, and those already working in schools and districts. Understanding the importance of high quality preschool classrooms, what those should look like, and the impact of preschool experiences on subsequent achievement in school, are essential for administrators operating in an outcomes-oriented school environment.

A growing number of states are providing focused professional development on relevant early childhood content to school administrators. The work is, in part, being driven by the urgency to implement critical policy areas in the pre-K-12 arena. In many cases it involves cross-agency or cross-district teams, so that perspectives from the pre-K through third grade continuum can be shared. These examples provide

robust models and resources that other states can draw upon in developing their own training and development policies and plans. In most cases, however, the impact of these models has not been evaluated in depth (or at all). This would be a useful step in future, to understand more clearly the impact of each element of training.

Administering pre-K through third grade as part of one continuum within the system represents a significant shift for state education agencies, teacher preparation programs, and elementary principals. The following policy recommendations are suggested by this research.

- **Tie principal professional development to state policy priorities for maximum effectiveness.** Reforming preparation and professional development of principals to include pre-K preparation and content is more likely to be sustained when aligned with, and tightly coupled to, state pre-K through third grade reform priorities. Several respondents noted that their leadership training efforts were very specifically connected to current policy reform plans (e.g. Common Core, teacher evaluation) because the reforms were most relevant to principals—and when resources are limited, districts and states want time and dollars to count towards multiple goals.
- **Customize the professional development model and approach to reflect state policy and local implementation.** State partnerships with professional associations within the state and community can help to build support for ongoing professional development, and help to develop coherence and continuity throughout the preschool or birth-through-third-grade continuum, emphasizing the influential role of the elementary school principal.
- **Principal professional development content must build bridges between the cultures and practices of birth to age five programs and Kindergarten through grade three.** Specific histories, content, and leadership skills understanding must be bidirectional (e.g. birth through age five needs to understand K-3 and K-3 needs to understand birth through age five). Yet they must differentiate content and requirements by age and grade to ensure principals have appropriate, specialized knowledge and skills to support teachers in providing appropriate experiences for children.
- **Provide incentives to include early childhood content in school administrator licensure and professional development.** Higher Education professors who teach principal preparation courses often are not included in state training initiatives or even the conversations surrounding principal preparation. It is important for states to work with the professors at colleges and universities who prepare principals. Ensure that principals are able to either obtain college credit or continuing education units to support their recertification.
- **Frame principal preparation and professional development as talent recruitment and retention strategies.** Principal turnover is high. A focus on training, retention, and evaluation, to provide ongoing feedback and support, would be likely to enhance recruiting and reduce turnover. There are many opportunities to introduce early childhood content and child development training to principals who are likely to be supervising teachers of early childhood classrooms within, or linked to, elementary public schools.

- **Build in evaluation and data collection to track outcomes of principal professional development models.** It is not clear that any states or training programs have implemented ongoing evaluations of their training efforts: examining implementation fidelity and short- and long-term outcomes will be helpful in refining the content and processes of these programs, and understanding how they can be most helpful to principals, districts, and states. There is also little evidence of the role of using data to understand the impact of principal preparation or training programs incorporating early childhood content on child outcomes or classroom quality, perhaps because there are so few of them, and most are early in their development stages.

Recent participation across pre-K-12 in developing Early Learning Challenge grants may be one strong lever to develop broader collaborative groups and deepen understanding across all levels of the role and importance of quality early childhood programs. This provides an excellent opportunity for policymakers to introduce comprehensive principal preparation processes and policies within states, and a deeper understanding of why it is important to do so. Additionally, the National Association of Elementary School Principals is engaged in revising their 2005 recommendations on what principals should know and be able to do to lead early childhood communities^{xxxiii} and has released *Building and Supporting an Aligned System: A Vision for Transforming Education Across the Pre-K-Grade Three Years*.^{xxxiv} The Reform Support Network has released a brief describing promising practices in principal preparation programs, and provides in-depth discussion about best practices for using data, for example.^{xxxv}

This examination of state policies has raised many questions for future exploration, including:

- What are best practices for developing an initiative to enhance early childhood content, knowledge, and experience in recruiting, licensing, and regulating Pre-K-12 principals in states that don't have it?
- What licensure, content/courses, and professional development practices are best for promoting excellent outcomes for children in early childhood education programs and beyond?
- What states, if any, are evaluating the impact of training principals in early childhood content? How are they evaluating impact?

Currently, it appears that there are no states evaluating best practices for training principals and administrators in early childhood content and practices; the impact of training programs for administrators on classrooms and child outcomes; or how to recruit, train, and retain principals and administrators with a deep (or any) understanding of how early childhood classrooms and programs can work best. A better understanding of these issues could improve the experiences of early childhood teachers, who may be currently evaluated using inappropriate measures for their classroom activities. It may also encourage improved outcomes for children, as principals and administrators gain a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of the essential role of early childhood classrooms and teachers in preparing young children for future academic success.

Appendix A: Principal Interview Protocol

Protocol for State Principal Preparation and Development Interviews

STATE:

Contact:

Position:

Email:

Phone:

Purpose: To identify state policies, practices, and resources to prepare and support school principals in the effective, developmentally appropriate administration of birth – third grade programs.

Policy

1. What are the required license(s) or endorsement(s) for elementary school principals in your state?
2. What are the specific standards or areas of competence that must be attained by elementary school principals? (e.g., child development, curriculum/instruction/assessment, supervision, etc.)
3. Are there separate or specific early education requirements for elementary principals who administer early childhood programs (before kindergarten) in or by their school?

If yes: what are the requirements (content knowledge, demonstration of proficiency, practicum, etc.)?
4. Is there a birth – 3rd grade level principal license or endorsement?

If yes: what are the requirements (content knowledge areas or required coursework, demonstration of proficiency, practicum, etc.)?
5. Are there waivers that permit a principal without early education credentials to oversee pre-K?

If yes:
 - a. Are waivers provisional, temporary, or renewable?
 - b. Are there additional requirements that principals operating with a waiver must meet (e.g., coursework, coaching)?

6. If your state developed a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application, were there any provisions to address enhancing the birth – 3rd grade leadership skills of elementary principals?

Early Childhood Principal Preparation

1. What professional preparation programs are available in your state to prepare principals who will have birth – 3rd grade responsibilities?
 - a. University (list)
 - b. Other (list)
2. Are there specific B-3 early childhood core curriculum requirements for principal preparation programs?
 - a. If yes, what are they?
3. What models of early childhood principal preparation are used (check all that apply):
 - a. Traditional college coursework
 - b. Weekend coursework
 - c. Distance learning/Online coursework
 - d. Certificate programs
 - e. Workshops
 - f. Mentoring programs
 - g. Other:

Early Childhood Principal In-service/Continuing Education

1. What types of professional development opportunities are available to develop and support early education leadership among principals? Who provides these activities?
 - a. Leadership Institute or Academy (sponsored by:
 - b. Principal Network (sponsored by:
 - c. Mentoring/coaching (sponsored by:
 - d. Workshops/ workshop series (sponsored by:
 - e. Other: (sponsored by:
2. What birth – 3rd grade topics are typically addressed in Early Childhood Principal continuing education?
 - a. Child development
 - b. Atypical child development/diverse learning needs
 - c. Curriculum
 - d. Instruction
 - e. Assessment
 - f. Developmentally appropriate practices
 - g. Community resources/collaboration

- h. Leadership skills
- i. Management & supervision
- j. other

Resources

1. How does the SEA support early education leadership, specifically targeting principals?
2. Are there specific resources produced or promoted by the SEA to support highly qualified principals with early education responsibilities?
 - a. If yes, please list:
3. What other organizations or institutions are actively involved in supporting professional development for principals with early education responsibilities (state principals' association, ASCD, AEEYC affiliate, other)?
4. Are you aware of any state or regional affiliate activity supported by the National Association of Elementary School Principals?
 - a. Are the NAESP *Standards for What Principals Should Know* a recognized and utilized resource in your state?

Other

1. Is there anything else you'd like to mention about enhancing birth – 3rd grade leadership capacity of elementary principals that hasn't been addressed (need, state plans for the future, exemplary practices in your state, other?)

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State	Contact	Organization
Colorado	Lynn Andrews	The Institute at Clayton Early Learning/Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program (Colorado)
Connecticut	Dr. Andrea Brinnell	Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
Delaware	Dr. Jacquelyn Wilson	University of Delaware
District of Columbia	Dr. Sharon Brumbaugh	National Institute for School Leadership (Washington, DC)
Maryland	Judy Walker	Maryland Department of Education
Maryland	Dr. Rolf Grafwallner	Maryland Department of Education
Massachusetts	Brenda Gadson	CAYL Institute; Cambridge, MA
Massachusetts	Kate Amel	CAYL Institute; Cambridge, MA
New Jersey	Dr. Vincent Costanza	New Jersey Department of Education
North Carolina	Dr. Richard Lambert	University of North Carolina- Charlotte
Pennsylvania	Carla Wilson	Pennsylvania Department of Education
Pennsylvania	Dr. David Volkman	Pennsylvania Department of Education
Washington	Dr. Kristie Kauerz	University of Washington

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