



Issue #3: Principal Preparation, Professional Development, and Quality and Effectiveness

ESSA Background

On December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law with strong bipartisan support as the latest reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA is notable for devolving authority to states, emphasizing the use of evidence-based school interventions, and providing states greater flexibility to design broader school accountability systems while maintaining student performance goals.

Importantly, ESSA offers a renewed focus on school leadership and recognizes the impact of leaders on school improvement and effective instruction. The law provides states and districts new opportunities to fund school leadership and explicitly acknowledges leadership as a legitimate target of educational-improvement activities.

Under the law, states were required to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education detailing the goals, strategies, and funding priorities for their education system. To gain greater insight into the consideration of school leadership in state education systems, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), with the support of state-based review teams, conducted a comprehensive review of the 52 ESSA plans (50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico).

The Significance of Educator Preparation, Development, and Quality

This brief discusses three distinct, yet related, educational policy concepts: educator preparation programs, educator growth and development systems, and educator quality and effectiveness. As UCEA is interested in the treatment given to leadership in compliance with ESSA, this brief discusses these programs and systems as they relate to principals.

Principal preparation is a preservice component to the principal pipeline. Prior to becoming certified as a principal, candidates must complete an approved preparation program. Each state's requirements for preparation programs vary, but most states usually require candidates to complete a clinically rich internship in order to give each candidate real-world experience prior to entering the profession.

On the other hand, principal growth and development is an in-service component to the principal pipeline. After becoming certified, principals must continue to grow and develop their skills, as is true for most other professions. This process is often referred to as professional development. Some examples of professional development strategies are principal mentoring and an induction program to support new principals.

Preparation, Growth, and Quality: At a Glance

- **83% of plans** intend to use Title II, Part A funds to improve **preparation programs**.
- **98% of plans** intend to use Title II, Part A funds to support **growth and development systems**.
- **98% of plans** intend to use Title II, Part A funds to **support strategies designed to improve the quality and effectiveness** of teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

Lastly, principal quality and effectiveness refers to how principals are defined as effective and, furthermore, how the quality and effectiveness of principals can be improved over time. Steps can be taken to improve quality and effectiveness in both the preservice preparation step and the in-service growth and development step.

The quality and effectiveness of principals, supported by their growth and development, is critical for student achievement because principals lead the development of a positive school culture and a strong educator workforce. As argued by Dr. Paul Manna, principals can be “powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools. And those practices can contribute much to the success of the nation’s students.” Principals support student achievement by setting professional development agendas, recruiting and retaining talented teachers, and serving as mentors.

What Did UCEA’s Analysis Find?

UCEA’s 52-plan analysis determined that in regard to preparation programs, 43 out of 52 plans (83%) intend to use Title II-A funds to support preparation programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders.

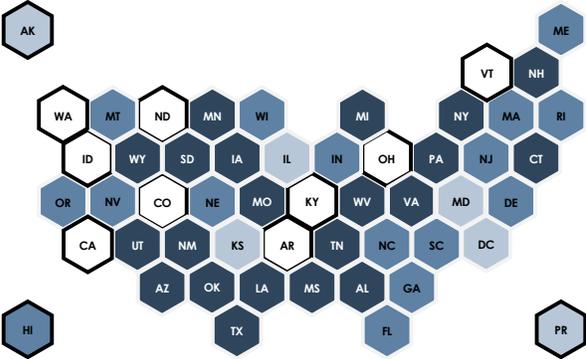
Also, 21 of 52 plans (40%) specifically mention using Title II-A funds to improve *principal* preparation programs. In comparison, 16 plans (31%) use the generic term *educator*, and six plans (12%) only describe improving teacher preparation programs. The remaining nine plans (17%) do not plan to use Title II-A funds to improve preparation programs.

“Utah will use Title II, Part A funds to create a pilot grant opportunity for LEAs [local education agencies] to develop a teacher leader program in collaboration with local teachers. Grant projects will be required to include a description of strategic plans to demonstrate commitment of the LEA to build leadership capacity of teachers.”

– Utah’s ESSA Plan

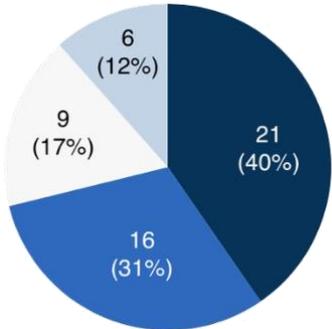
Improving Preparation Programs

States describing the use of Title II-A funds to improve preparation programs:



Legend

21 plans specifically mention improving <i>principal</i> preparation programs.
16 plans use generic term <i>educator</i> , which could imply principals.
6 plans only describe improving teacher preparation programs.
9 plans do not plan to use Title II, Part A funds to improve preparation programs.



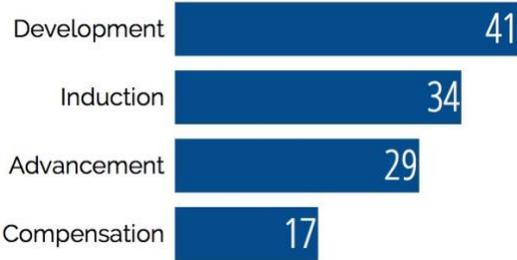
With regards to growth and development systems, 51 out of 52 plans (98%) intend to use Title II-A funds to support growth and development systems for principals, teachers, or other school leaders. Also, 42 plans (81%) specifically mention using Title II-A funds to improve *principal* growth and development systems. That is compared to seven plans (13%) that use the generic term *educator* and one plan (2%) that only references teachers. Only one plan (2%) does not intend to use Title II-A funds to improve growth and development systems.

UCEA also determined development to be the most common growth and improvement strategy. Forty-four ESSA plans listed development as a strategy. Furthermore, 34 plans intend to employ induction, 29 will promote advancement, and 17 plan to invest in compensation. These strategies are defined as followed:

- **Development:** Opportunities for principals to improve their competence and skills (e.g., coaching, workshops)
- **Induction:** A systematic system of support (e.g., a mentor) for new principals
- **Advancement:** Opportunities for promotion within the education field
- **Compensation:** Supplemental pay to be placed in an underperforming or rural school that aspiring school leaders otherwise might not consider

Professional Development Strategies

States deciding to employ different professional development strategies:



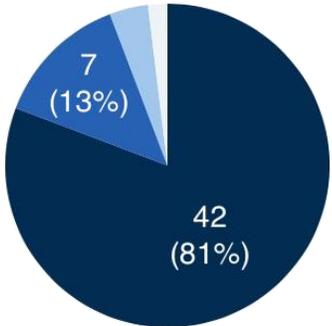
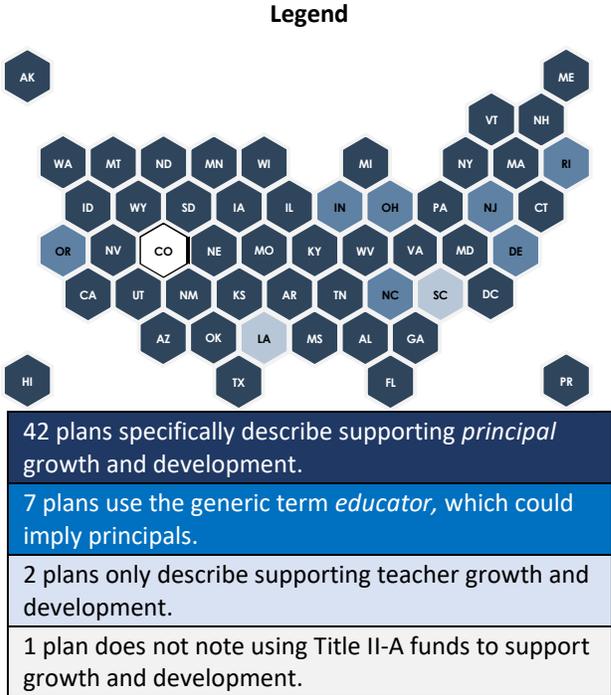
*States may employ more than one strategy.

“The ESSA offers new opportunities for districts and states to reconsider the way they develop and support school principals... New Professional Standards for Educational Leaders provide a set of foundational principles of what school leaders should know and be able to do that states and districts can look to as a framework to guide their own school leadership policy and practice.”

– AIR Report

Supporting Growth and Development

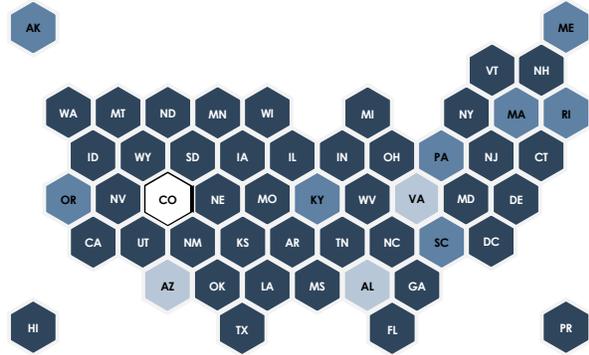
States deciding to use Title II, Part A funds to support growth and development systems:



Similarly, UCEA determined that 51 out of 52 plans (98%) intend to use Title II-A funds to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, or other school leaders. Note 40 plans (77%) specifically mention improving the quality and effectiveness of *principals*. That is compared to eight plans (15%) using the generic term *educator* and three plans (6%) only mentioning teachers. Only one plan (2%) does not plan to use Title II-A funds to improve educator quality and effectiveness.

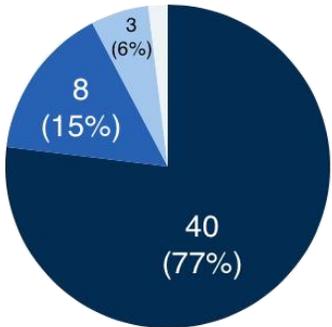
Improving Quality and Effectiveness

States deciding to use Title II, Part A funds to improve quality and effectiveness:



Legend

40 plans specifically describe improving <i>principal</i> quality and effectiveness.
8 plans use the generic term <i>educator</i> , which could imply principals.
3 plans only describe improving teacher quality and effectiveness.
1 plan does not plan to use Title II-A funds to improve quality and effectiveness.



State Highlights

Based on its 52-plan analysis, UCEA researchers choose to highlight four states’ plans, which demonstrated thoughtful attention to school leadership through their description of improving development, preparation, and quality for principals. Whereas this report does not claim to present an exhaustive representation of states’ plans to use Title II, Part A funding, these examples highlight the thoughtful investments of four states.

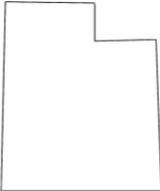
Pennsylvania plans to use Title II-A funds to support rigorous teacher and leader clinical residency programs through leveraging partnerships between districts and educator preparation programs. These programs would embed at least one year of clinical experience within preparation programs and would emphasize a residency model in which emerging educators are living and working in the communities and schools where they are learning and serving. Priority consideration would be given to communities that have reported chronic or multiple shortage areas.



Nebraska intends to use Title II-A funds to develop a framework of effective practices for principals as a professional development strategy. The state is also exploring the development of the Nebraska Professional Learning Academy, which would aim to enhance the quality and effectiveness of educational leaders.



Recognizing the important role school leaders play in bolstering student achievement, **Utah** aims to use Title II-A funds to launch a pilot subgrant opportunity for local education agencies to invest in the professional development of school leaders. In order to receive one of these development grants, they must demonstrate a commitment to building leader capacity.



Washington intends to employ all four professional development strategies. Specifically, they will enhance principal leadership programs in an effort to increase retention rates, provide additional compensation for principals in low-income schools, and create additional avenues for aspiring school leaders to advance within the profession.



Implications

Out of the six focal areas of analysis UCEA examined, the highest percentage of states elected to use Title II-A funds for supporting growth and development systems and improving quality and effectiveness. Colorado was the only state that elected not to use Title II-A funds to support these focal areas. Instead, Colorado plans to utilize other state resources to support them.

It is also worth noting that these two focal areas had the highest percentage of specific use for principals. Out of 51 plans describing the intent to use Title II-A funds to support growth and development systems, 42 plans (82%) intend to support *principal* growth and development. Similarly, out of 51 plans using Title II-A funds to improve the quality and effectiveness of educators, 40 plans (79%) intend to improve *principal* quality and effectiveness. UCEA's qualitative analysis, however, observed that few plans define, "quality" or "effective."

In terms of preparation programs overall, UCEA documented more emphasis on teacher preparation than principal and leader preparation. Whereas 43 plans (83%) intend to use Title II-A funds to support preparation programs, only 21 plans (48%) describe supporting *principal* preparation programs.

Although it is encouraging to see a vast majority of states striving to improve *principal* quality and effectiveness, defining what a quality principal is will be a necessary component to evaluate the success of state strategies.

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