

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING ACT

Summary

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Effective principals are essential to improving student achievement at high-need schools.

There is virtually no documented instance of a struggling school that has been turned around without an effective principal. Moreover, research underscores the importance of school leadership—researchers at the Universities of Minnesota and Toronto found that school leadership is second only to teacher quality in its impact on student achievement. And while teacher quality has the greatest impact, several studies show that principal quality determines whether schools can attract and retain effective teachers.

Too few principals are prepared to lead high-need schools. Because few principals are prepared to take on the challenge of leading high-need schools, these schools have difficulty attracting and retaining effective principals. In fact, research confirms that schools serving minority, low-income, and low-achieving students tend to be led by the least qualified principals. While there are a few outstanding programs in some areas of the country that train principals to lead high-need schools, these programs are the exception rather than the rule.

The School Principal Recruitment and Training Act will address the shortage of skilled principals in high-need schools by investing in proven strategies for recruiting and preparing effective principals. The bill includes the following elements:

- **Competitive Grants.** The bill will provide competitive grants to school districts (and partnerships between school districts and other entities) to recruit and prepare talented candidates to lead high-need schools.
- **A Focus on Instructional Leadership and Data Usage.** In contrast to typical principal preparation programs, programs funded under the bill will focus on training current and aspiring principals to become instructional leaders, and to use student data to inform school improvement efforts.
- **A Year-Long Residency and Two Years of Follow-Up Support.** The programs for aspiring principals will combine coursework with hands-on learning through a year-long residency at a school under the wing of a mentor principal. These programs will also provide their graduates with additional professional development and support for at least two years after they begin their work as principals.
- **Accountability for Results.** Grantees will compete to renew their grants or scale up their efforts based on their performance. The primary determinant of each grantee's performance will be whether schools led by principals trained by the grantee's program have obtained greater student achievement gains than comparable schools.
- **Research and Evaluation.** The bill will fund both a high-quality evaluation of the grantees' programs and the dissemination of the best practices of effective programs.