New York Leadership Academy <https://www.nycleadershipacademy.org/about>

NISL

*By Robert Rothman*

In April 2017, 16 states and the District of Columbia [submitted their plans](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Every_Student_Succeeds_Act.html) for complying with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the federal law enacted in 2015 that replaced No Child Left Behind. These plans spell out how the states intend to carry out the law, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, in areas such as implementing standards and assessments, developing accountability systems, turning around low-performing schools, and supporting effective educators.

Unlike previous reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESSA allows states considerable flexibility in how they design their plans. This flexibility creates an opportunity for innovations in the areas covered by the law.

In their plans, many of the states addressed strategies to improve school leadership. The emphasis on school leadership reflects provisions in the law that allow states to use funds for school improvement (Title I) and for improving educator effectiveness (Title II) to improve school leadership, as long as the interventions are evidence-based, according to criteria spelled out in the law. These provisions represent a new focus on school leadership in federal law. (For more on ESSA’s implications for school leadership, please see the recent [NISL white paper](https://fs24.formsite.com/edweek/form366/fill?7=EDWEEK).)

Analyses of the state plans by NISL and [Education First](http://education-first.com/library/publication/investing-title-ii-strengthening-school-teacher-leadership/) suggest that the states intend to address school leadership under the law in the following ways:

*Creating pipelines to increase the supply of school leaders*. States plan to expand or develop structures to identify potential school leaders and train them to take on the job. For example, Tennessee will expand the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance, which supports local partnerships in efforts to identify and develop effective leaders. Delaware will strengthen its online educator recruitment portal, which enables aspiring principals to search for available positions and districts to search for capable candidates.

*Establishing or expanding mentorships for new school leaders*. States plan to build or strengthen programs to support newly hired principals by connecting them with expert principals who can serve as mentors. Maryland will coordinate with districts to create a consistent, structured mentor training program for principal mentors across the state. Michigan will support the establishment and improvement of mentoring and induction programs for new school leaders in all districts. The Michigan Department of Education will also provide technical assistance to support these efforts.

*Organizing learning networks or communities of practice for school leaders*. States plan to support school leaders by creating or strengthening networks to enable them to support one another and build their leadership capacities. Delaware will create a network of school leaders in high-needs schools and provide them with robust, rigorous training. The District of Columbia will create a Principal Leadership Cadre, a group of highly effective principals who will work with representatives of institutions of higher education to share best practices with their colleagues through mentoring, coaching, and training.

*Providing professional learning opportunities for school leaders*. States plan to ramp up professional learning for practicing principals. Illinois will create a network of partners, called IL-EMPOWER, that  will provide professional development opportunities for principals in areas such as family and community engagement and instructional leadership. Maryland will collaborate with LEAs to develop professional learning for principals, assistant principals, aspiring principals, and teacher leaders, aligned with state professional standards for educational leaders. This may include residency programs; focused academies; professional learning communities (PLCs); webinars; online courses; regional workshops; and action research.

Details of the plans are available on state websites for [Arizona](http://www.azed.gov/essa/draftplan/), [Colorado](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa), [Connecticut](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2683&Q=336396), [Delaware](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3294), [Illinois](https://www.isbe.net/essa), [Louisiana](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/about-us/every-student-succeeds-act-(essa)), [Maine](http://www.maine.gov/doe/essa/), [Massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/accountability/financial-support/title-i-and-other-federal-support-programs/essa-every-student-succeeds-act/), [Michigan](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_76731---,00.html), [Nevada](http://www.doe.nv.gov/Boards_Commissions_Councils/ESSA_Adv_Group/ESSA_Advisory_Group/), [New Jersey](http://www.state.nj.us/education/ESSA/), [New Mexico](http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/ESSA.html), [North Dakota](https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/1494/FinalNDESSAPlanforSubmission.pdf), [Oregon](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/rules-and-policies/Documents/OR_consolidatedStateplan.pdf), [Tennessee](http://www.tennessee.gov/education/section/essa), [Vermont](http://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/education-laws/essa), and the [District of Columbia](https://osse.dc.gov/essa).

As a next step, peer reviewers selected by the U.S. Department of Education will examine the plans and offer feedback and suggestions for revision. Once approved by the Department, the plans will go into effect in the 2017-18 school year.

States that have not yet submitted plans are required to do so by September 13 of this year. Those plans will show whether states are taking advantage of the flexibility ESSA provides to ramp up efforts to recruit, prepare, and support their school leaders over the next few years.

**A Curriculum That Addresses the Many Roles of Today's School Leaders**

* [Strategic Thinker](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Strategic Thinker**

In military and business education, it’s well known that leaders must be able to think and act strategically, setting goals, managing resources, charting a course and overcoming obstacles. NISL provides frameworks for strategic thinking and decision making along with research and interactive exercises to strengthen participants’ ability to lead their schools strategically.

**Units:**

*1. The Education Challenge*

*2. The Principal as Strategic Thinker*

*11. The Principal as Driver of Change*

* [Visionary](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Visionary**

Whether it’s posted on a website or hanging in a hall, almost all school leaders can point to their school “vision.” But is the vision achievable, worthwhile and measureable, and one that will inspire staff to new heights? NISL helps leaders understand their role in creating an ongoing vision, what makes a vision strong and how to lead their staff, students and community towards that vision.

**Units:**

*1. The Education Challenge*

*3. Standards-Based Instructional Systems and School Design*

*4. Foundations of Effective Learning*

* [Instructional Leader](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Instructional Leader**

Like never before, school leaders are responsible for student learning in their schools. Districts know they need principals who are strong instructional leaders, but rarely do all of school leaders have knowledge and skills necessary to improve instruction in a systemic way. NISL provides this foundation with research, discussions, applied learning and tools that provide a comprehensive understanding in everything from standards-based instruction to leveraging data and assessment, from best practices in the content areas to coaching towards improved instruction.

**Units**

*1. The Education Challenge*

*4. Foundations of Effective Learning*

*5. Leaderhsip for Excellence in Literacy*

*6. Leadership for Excellence in Math*

*7. Leadership for Excellence in Science*

*8. Promoting Professional Learning*

*9. The Principal as Instructional Leader and Team Builder*

* [Data Master](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Data Master**

There is an unprecedented amount of data available in schools today and unprecedented pressure to ensure that this data points to ever-increasing student achievement. Principals need to have a deep understanding not only of summative assessments, but also classroom observations and formative assessments. They must know how to use data to group students, to set and measure goals, and to inform changes in instruction. They also must be able to organize teams and set the parameters for how data will be leveraged in their school. The Executive Development Program provides the guidance and practice to help a school leader become a “Data Master.”

**Units**

*1. The Educational Challenge*

*11. The Principal as Driver of Change*

*12. Leading for Results*

* [Team Leader](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Team Leader**

Participants in the Executive Development Program come to understand the power of teams to accomplish school goals. They develop the capacity to promote professional learning, build collaborative teams and distribute leadership within their building, and they lead the entire school faculty in setting high expectations for students.

**Unit**

*9. The Principal as Instructional Leader and Team Builder*

* [Coach and Mentor](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Coach and Mentor**

Across the country, teacher evaluations are gaining prominence. Principals often play the lead role in conducting portions of these evaluations. To play this role effectively, principals must understand what good instruction looks like. For instruction to improve, they need to be able coach and mentor teachers to elevate their practice. NISL provides the content-area focus necessary to identify good instruction, and an instructional coaching model and experience using it, for principals to effectively leverage their insights to improve instruction and strengthen their relationship with teachers.

**Unit**

*Coaching Institute*

* [Creator of Just, Fair and Caring Culture](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Creator of Just, Fair and Caring Culture**

A school that mechanically focuses on meeting mandated targets is unlikely to meet them. School leaders must understand the stakes involved in students’ learning, believe that all students can succeed, and understand the importance of treating staff and students fairly and with respect. And they must be able to spread these beliefs among staff, students, parents and the community to achieve sustained success. NISL participants discover why high expectations and the courage to take action are the foundation of a just, fair and caring culture in which all students believe they can succeed. They learn how to widen the circle of support for students by cultivating community involvement and integrating community resources effectively into their school.

**Units**

*1. The Educational Challenge*

*9. The Principal as Instructional Leader and Team Builder*

*10. The Principal as Ethical Leader*

* [Driver of Change](http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/curriculum-course-content/#icons_modal)

**Driver of Change**

Driving change in a school first requires a deep understanding of why change is necessary—and what kinds of changes will make a real impact. Beginning in the very first unit, and throughout the curriculum, participants develop this understanding and come away with an unwavering commitment to drive change. They also learn what they need to know and be able to do as a change agent to provide the guidance and direction to their school community, moving steadily from small wins to substantial gains. They learn how to identify and enlist the aid of friends, identify root problems and causes, gather intelligence, and formulate sound action plans for sustained instructional improvement.

**Units**

*1. The Education Challenge*

*11. The Principal as Driver of Change*

The responsibilities and demands of an effective school leader have expanded far beyond that of “building manager.”  Click the leadership areas above to learn more about the roles of today’s school leaders and how the NISL Executive Development Program empowers them to succeed in all of them. The program accomplishes this through a thoughtfully designed, cohesive curriculum consisting of 12 two-day units delivered over 12 to 15 months:

**Course 1: World-Class Schooling: Vision and Goals**

* Unit 1: The Educational Challenge
* Unit 2: The Principal as Strategic Thinker
* Unit 3: Elements of Standards-Aligned Instructional Systems

**Course 2: Focus on Teaching and Learning**

* Unit 4: Foundations of Effective Learning
* Unit 5: Leadership in the Instructional Core: English Language Arts and History
* Unit 6: Leadership in the Instructional Core: Science and Mathematics
* Unit 7: Coaching for High-Quality Teaching

**Course 3: Sustaining Transformation through Capacity and Commitment**

* Unit 8: Promoting the Learning Organization
* Unit 9: Teams for Instructional Leadership
* Unit 10: Ethical Leadership for Equity
* Unit 11: Driving and Sustaining Transformation
* Unit 12: Final Case Simulation and Presentations

**NISL Advanced Credentialing System for Principals**

* **U.S. Department of Education SEED grant funds large-scale pilot across three states.**
* NISL is implementing a national advanced credentialing system that aims to revolutionize the principalship in America. The project’s goal is more than to simply identify and credential high-performing principals but also to create large numbers of them.
* The initiative is being piloted in partnership with state departments of education in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Mississippi under a three-year, $10.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education through its highly competitive Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program.
* NISL is building the advanced credentialing system based on two major research findings. First, numerous studies have pointed to the importance of a strong principal in accelerating student learning, particularly in low-performing schools. Second, based in large part on [international benchmarking research](http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking) conducted by its parent organization, the National Center on Education and the Economy, several of the highest-performing education systems in the world use a similar strategy to leverage school principal leadership development as a foundation of their improvement approach.
* NISL’s advanced credentialing system will give principals a transparent, codified and respected leadership development system that supports and rewards them as they progress through their careers—as it does in the world’s top-performing education systems.
* The advanced credentialing system will empower principals, building their capacity as instructional leaders to improve teacher effectiveness and increase student achievement—across whole schools and whole districts.

**About the Advanced Credentialing System**

In late 2015, the U.S. Department of Education awarded NISL a $10.9 million Supporting Effective Educator Development ([SEED](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/edseed/index.html?exp=0)) grant to create an Advanced Credentialing System for Principals. The highly competitive SEED grant program aims at creating learning and career growth opportunities for aspiring and current educators serving students in high-need schools.

As the sole school leadership program among the 12 recipients in the 2015 SEED grant cycle, NISL has engaged 160 districts across Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Mississippi to create an Advanced Credentialing System for Principals. The three-state effort has already enrolled some 1,100 principals serving more than 500,000 students.

Based on [NISL’s years of research](http://www.nisl.net/research-base) into the leadership development strategies and structures in the world’s best education systems and organizations, the SEED grant-funded initiative will include:

1. Designing an advanced credentialing system, enlisting the expertise of an international team of educators and researchers that is supported by a two advanced credentials and an aligned professional development system.
2. Piloting of the system in partnership with three states and 160 school districts.
3. Conducting a “gold standard” evaluation of the pilot, in partnership with the RAND Corporation, to document the impact of the support system on principal leadership and to provide feedback to implement future improvements to the system.
4. Building capacity at the state and district level to sustain the advanced credentialing system after the grant period is over.

NISL has convened a panel of experts to award the initial credentials to deserving educators. The initial criteria for a Distinguished Principals will include the following:

* Professional Experience
* Proven Leadership Success Relating to Student Achievement
* Capacity for Strategic Leadership Including:
  1. High-quality aligned instructional systems
  2. High-quality teachers and teaching
  3. High-performance organization and management
  4. Equitable distribution of school resources

Distinguished Principals that have demonstrated they can improve the practice of school leaders earlier in their career will then be eligible for the Master Principal credential, a designation reserved for the most accomplished and influential school leaders in the profession.

The chart below illustrates the structure of the SEED grant-funded advanced credentialing system for principals both within the principal ranks and in the context of a broader educator career ladder.