

# Strengthening Pathways of Professional Learning and Growth for Teachers and Principals



**COALITION** FOR  
**TEACHING**  
**QUALITY**  
PREPARED AND EFFECTIVE  
EDUCATORS FOR ALL

# Strengthening Pathways of Professional Learning and Growth for Teachers and Principals

In order to ensure that profession-ready teachers and principals<sup>1</sup> advance from novices to accomplished professionals, strong professional learning and growth systems must be in place to provide comprehensive support and tailored learning opportunities for each stage of the career. As with other professions that provide scaffolded support and strong mentoring, this professional learning and growth system should foster a supportive school environment and should be built on the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that characterize a teacher's and principal's practice at each stage of his or her career.

The responsibility of having a strong professional learning and growth system is made more critical given that current social, economic, and political realities require educators to accomplish greater academic goals with shrinking resources, analyze and use complex data, incorporate rapidly changing technology into instruction and learning, and prepare young people with higher-order thinking skills appropriate to a global society. In addition, the changing demographics of students means that educators must also be increasingly equipped with the skills and knowledge to work with diverse learners, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Research makes it clear that teachers, together with principals, are the most important school-based influences on student learning.<sup>2</sup> Given the critical role that teachers and principals have in preparing every student – regardless of income, race, disability, culture, English learner status, or zip code – to meet the demands of school, society, and the global economy, we must do a better job of systemically developing and sustaining a high-quality, professional educator workforce. Such a system will require a comprehensive vision, stakeholder and parent engagement, capacity building and resources for educators, and a commitment to collaboration.

<sup>1</sup> Coalition for Teaching Quality, *Profession-Ready Teachers & Principals for Each and Every Child*, October 2014. Retrieved from [http://www.coalitionforteachingquality.org/images/upload/Profession\\_Doc.pdf](http://www.coalitionforteachingquality.org/images/upload/Profession_Doc.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See: Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Nation's Future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press; Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A. and Kain, J.F. (2005). "Teachers, Schools and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica* 73(2), 417-458. Retrieved from <http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~jon/Econ230C/HanushekRivkin.pdf>

Branch, G.F., Rivkin, S.G., and Hanushek, E.A. (2013). "School Leaders Matter: Measuring the Impact of Effective Principals," *Education Next* 13(1).

<sup>3</sup> National Association of State Boards of Education (2011). *Gearing Up: Creating a Systemic Approach to Teacher Effectiveness*, <http://www.nnstoy.org/download/evaluation/Gearing%20Up%20Teacher%20Workforce.pdf>.

While the specifics differ for teachers and principals, the Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that states and districts provide comprehensive and complementary professional learning and growth systems for teachers and principals that include:

- Induction programs with comprehensive mentoring;
- Ongoing professional learning focused on capacity building and collaboration;
- Evaluation that provides feedback for professional growth;
- Supported pathways for career progressions including board certification and leadership opportunities;
- Appropriate measures to provide information about how professional learning is impacting student outcomes, school climate, and family engagement; and
- Strengthening cultural and linguistic competence and responsiveness.

## Professional Learning and Growth Systems for Teachers

Educators, like all professionals, learn throughout their careers, and the types of learning and support needed differ depending on the stage of their career they are in, their own individual professional goals and challenges, and their local context and priorities. Learning and growth for teachers therefore must be supported as linked systems in which induction, professional learning, evaluation, and career pathways are connected and interdependent.

## Establish or Strengthen Induction Programs for Beginning Teachers.

Comprehensive mentoring and induction programs are critical for reducing teacher turnover and strengthening new teacher effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> Well-trained and supported mentors are an especially important aspect of comprehensive induction programs. According to a May 2015 Institute for Education Sciences (IES) report, beginning



teachers with mentors stay in the profession longer than teachers without mentors.<sup>4</sup> Effective induction programs should include the following elements:<sup>5</sup>

- A focus on building the skills and knowledge of individual educators as well as the collective capacity of the educator workforce;
- Systematic processes for providing feedback designed to guide teachers' growth;
- Rigorous and diverse mentor selection, with a preference toward teachers with demonstrated excellence in teaching and facilitating the professional learning of colleagues, and mentors matched by grade level and subject area;<sup>6</sup>
- High-quality training and ongoing support for mentors;
- Common planning time or regularly scheduled collaboration for mentor and mentee; and
- Resources such as research-based teaching standards and teacher portfolio processes to guide educator learning.

## Ensure Professional Learning is Collaborative, Continuous, and Teacher-Led.

The Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that states and school districts provide teachers with the time and support they need for ongoing, team-based, job-embedded professional learning.<sup>7</sup> Building the knowledge and skills of educators, as well as professional development that strengthens teachers' cultural competencies, can result in improved efficacy for all teachers, and is especially critical for teachers negotiating changing student demographics, standards, assessments, or technologies. Technology can increasingly enable ongoing relevant professional learning



with tools that can provide supports ranging from just-in-time resources to online communities for discussing ongoing practice issues.<sup>8</sup> OECD studies show that countries that intentionally focus on supporting and providing protected time for teacher collaboration achieve more skillful teaching and stronger student achievement.<sup>9</sup> Yet international comparisons reveal that while U.S. teachers work more hours per week than their global counterparts, U.S. teachers have much less time in their schedules for planning, collaboration, and professional learning. In fact, research from the National Center for Literacy Education shows that the percentage of teachers with protected time for collaboration actually declined significantly between 2009 and 2012.<sup>10</sup> Research finds that the most effective collaboration is based on ongoing shared inquiry, is grounded in evidence of classroom practice, and is measured against a clear, shared definition of success, such as the standards for professional learning developed by the organization Learning Forward.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Public School Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the First Five Years: Results From the First Through Fifth Waves of the 2007-08 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study First Look; retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015337.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> New Teacher Center (2016) High Quality Mentoring and Induction Practices.

<sup>6</sup> Ingersoll, R. & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A Critical Review of the Research. *Review of Education Research*. Vol. 81(2), 201-233

<sup>7</sup> Learning Forward, *Standards for Professional Learning*, [http://learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning#VM\\_eL00tGM8](http://learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning#VM_eL00tGM8).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Future ready schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. <http://tech.ed.gov/futureready/professional-learning/future-ready-district/>

<sup>9</sup> Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). *To Close the Achievement Gap, We Need to Close the Teaching Gap*, Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darlinghammond/to-close-the-achievement\\_b\\_5542614.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darlinghammond/to-close-the-achievement_b_5542614.html).

<sup>10</sup> National Center for Literacy Education. (2012). *Remodeling literacy learning: Making room for what works*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

<sup>11</sup> <http://learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning#Vcu1qE3bJMs>

**Support Evaluation Systems that Foster Growth and Development.**

The Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that teacher evaluation systems be part of a larger professional learning and growth system that supports teachers in moving from the novice to accomplished level and is used for the purpose of fostering feedback and reflective practice. States should improve their evaluation systems with collaboration from all stakeholders, teachers, paraprofessionals, and organizations that represent these professionals. Collaboration with peers can be an integral component of a shared accountability system. Yet international comparisons show that U.S. teachers receive less of the type of feedback that research shows is most useful for improving practice: feedback from peers.<sup>12</sup> Evaluation components should be focused on teacher development that leads to improved student learning and teaching skills. In rare cases, teachers not able to meet agreed-upon professional growth targets should be counseled out of the profession.



**Provide a Pathway and Support for Career Progressions.**

Teaching is a continuously developing and evolving profession, as new standards, resources, and technologies create new opportunities for developing practice and new roles within the career. Career ladder opportunities include coaching based on content expertise and particular skills, team leaders and facilitators, and other leadership roles (detailed in Coalition’s Leadership document). A lattice of growth opportunities and roles also strengthens the profession overall as educators support each other and deepen their own practice.



The Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that states and districts approach educator support as a developmental continuum of teacher licensure, compensation, and support systems with milestones and markers along the pathway to accomplished teaching. This would ensure that teachers in their first year and in their 20th year of teaching have opportunities to strengthen their practice. Board certification for teachers, for instance, can serve as a lever to systematically build the quality of the teaching workforce by acting as a goal for new teachers to aspire to and as a platform for teachers to grow professionally and to become leaders in their schools, districts, states, and the profession.

<sup>12</sup> OECD (2013). *Teaching and Learning International Survey*. Talis. Paris: OECD.

<sup>13</sup> Davis, S.; Darling-Hammond, L.; LaPointe, M.; & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

**Network to Transform Teaching**

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is working with teachers and school, district, and union leaders in nine states and two districts to improve teaching and learning by exponentially increasing their ranks of Board-certified teachers, especially in high-need schools. To reach this goal, principals and teachers in pilot schools in Clark County (NV), San Francisco (CA), Alabama, Arizona, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Washington will integrate the National Board Standards and the pursuit of Board certification into teachers' work, particularly through job-embedded professional learning. Pilot schools will also work to leverage the instructional expertise of accomplished teachers to lead professional learning for their peers and to strengthen the support new teachers receive so they can develop into accomplished practitioners.

**Professional Learning and Growth Systems for Principals**

Effective school principals influence student achievement by supporting and developing effective teachers, managing curriculum in ways that promote student learning, and creating a productive school culture that builds collaborative and organizational processes.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the systems that support principals’ growth and development need to be comprehensive, aligned, and supported by policies and resources.

**Establish or Strengthen Mentoring and Induction Programs for Principals.**

The Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that states and districts establish or strengthen mentoring and induction programs for principals during their residency program and throughout the first three years of a principal’s career in service. Programs should be integrated into the professional development continuum, be based on high standards and expectations for performance, and be supported by strong commitments and clearly defined roles for stakeholders. Further, they should be based on evidence of what works, including capacity building favoring the transference of knowledge through mentor-coaching



relationships; tight matches between the expertise, needs, leadership style, and school experience of coaches and protégé principals; and sufficient training and resources for coaches. Innovative programs for mentoring principals include university-district partnerships that incorporate clinical internships with strong mentoring relationships, collaborations with school districts for high quality placements, and cohort groups engaged in studying a more coherent and more relevant curriculum.

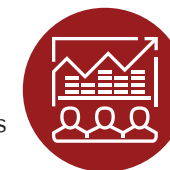
**Support Ongoing Professional Learning and Capacity Building.**

Principals and assistant principals must be afforded professional development opportunities that support their role as instructional leaders so that they have the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to improve school and student performance, and support and improve the instructional practice of educators in the classroom. Research has proven that one of the most positive impacts a principal can have in a school occurs when he or she is able to focus on instructional coaching and build strong relationships with teachers. States and school districts must include training for principals on best practices for instructional coaching, including how to improve their ability to mentor and coach teachers to build their capacity to improve, as well as training on the evaluation system and rubric they will be using.<sup>15</sup> Collaborative, experienced-based professional learning, such as cohort groups, site visits with other principals, and professional learning communities, provide effective training and support.



**Ensure Principal Evaluation Systems Build Capacity.**

Coalition for Teaching Quality recommends that state or district principal evaluation systems be created in collaboration with practitioners, consider a school’s context along with the individual principal’s experience and grade-level responsibilities, and be tied to professional growth plans. The myriad factors involved in measuring student achievement and the complexity of a principal’s role requires many factors that must be a part of a principal evaluation model. In addition, the purpose of evaluation should be to



build a principal’s leadership capacity and ability to create the optimum conditions for learning. Capacity-building evaluation systems include comprehensive support structures and resources for professional development, reflective practice, induction support for early career principals, personalized professional growth plans, and advanced certification/recognition for accomplished practice. An ideal evaluation system would give equal consideration to the six domains of professional leadership prioritized by the research and weight them appropriately with regard to the immediate needs of the school, the context of the learning community, and the level of authority of an individual principal.<sup>16</sup>

**Strengthen Principals’ Skills and Capacity in Cultivating Effective Teams**

The work of instructional improvement in schools increasingly depends upon effective teamwork. Organizing and leading teams that work together effectively and that are able to identify and address students’ learning needs requires specific leadership skills. Effective principal professional development focuses on building the principal’s capacity to address essential issues related to teaching and learning.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, principal learning is directly linked not only to his or her own growth, but also to teacher development, instructional improvements, and increasing student achievement.

States and districts should provide professional learning opportunities for principals on how to lead and support teacher teams and create the school-based conditions for effective teacher collaboration.<sup>18</sup> These professional learning opportunities should expose school leaders to effective instructional approaches and use a reflective process to show principals how to offer meaningful feedback to teachers in their schools. States and districts should also organize a cross-school network of instructional leadership teams comprised of principals and teachers to help them jointly lead instructional improvement at their sites. In addition to offering extensive, high-quality learning opportunities focused on curriculum and instruction, effective professional learning for school leaders can offer supports in the form of mentoring, developing principals’ networks and study groups, structuring collegial school

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/Documents/Good-Principals-Arent-Born-Theyre-Mentored.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.nassp.org/Content/158/NASSP\\_NAESP\\_Joint\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](https://www.nassp.org/Content/158/NASSP_NAESP_Joint_Policy_Brief.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Rethinking Principal Evaluation: A New Paradigm Informed by Research and Practice*, National Association of Elementary School Principals & the National Association of Secondary School Principals, September 2012. Retrieved at <http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/PrincipalEvaluationReport.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Sparks, D., & Hirsch, S. (2000). *Learning to lead, leading to learn: Improving school quality through principal professional development*. Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

<sup>18</sup> A number of tools for districts and principals interested in building professional learning teams and promoting trust within schools [can be found here](#).

# Participating Organizations

## National Organizations

Alliance for Excellent Education  
 Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education  
 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
 American Association of People with Disabilities  
 American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
 American Council for School Social Work  
 American Council on Rural Special Education  
 American Federation of Teachers  
 The ARC  
 ASPIRA Association  
 Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
 Autism National Committee  
 Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
 Center for Teaching Quality  
 Citizen Action of New York  
 Citizens for Effective Schools  
 Coalition for Community Schools  
 Communities for Excellent Public Schools  
 Council for Exceptional Children  
 Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates  
 Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc.  
 Easter Seals  
 Education Law Center  
 Educators Rising  
 FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing  
 First Focus Campaign for Children  
 Gamaliel Foundation  
 Helen Keller National Center  
 Higher Education Consortium for Special Education  
 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
 Latino Elected and Appointed Officials  
 Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
 Leadership for the Common Good  
 League of United Latin American Citizens  
 Learning Disabilities Association of America  
 Movement Strategy Center  
 NAACP  
 NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
 National Alliance of Black School Educators  
 National Association for the Education of Young Children  
 National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
 National Association of Elementary School Principals  
 National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Secondary School Principals  
 National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
 National Board for Professional Teaching Standards  
 National Center for Learning Disabilities  
 National Center on Deaf-Blindness  
 National Commission on Teaching & America's Future  
 National Council for Educating Black Children  
 National Council of Teachers of English  
 National Council of Teachers of Mathematics  
 National Disability Rights Network  
 National Down Syndrome Congress  
 National Down Syndrome Society  
 National Education Association  
 National Indian Education Association  
 National Latino Education Research & Policy Project  
 National Network of State Teachers of the Year  
 National Opportunity to Learn Campaign  
 National Urban League  
 New Teacher Center  
 Opportunity Action  
 Phi Delta Kappa International  
 Parents Across America  
 Partnership for 21st Century Skills  
 Progressive States Action  
 Public Advocacy for Kids  
 Public Advocates Inc.  
 Rural School and Community Trust  
 School Social Work Association of America  
 South East Asia Resource Action Center  
 TASH - Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities  
 Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children  
 TESOL International Association  
 United Cerebral Palsy  
 United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries

## State and Local Organizations

Abbott Leadership Institute, Newark, New Jersey  
 Action Now, Illinois  
 Action Now, North Carolina  
 ACTION United  
 Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)  
 Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)

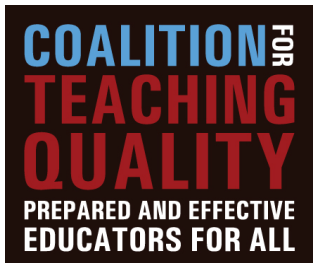
# Participating Organizations *(continued)*

Arkansas Community Organizations  
 Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network  
 Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Chicago  
 California Association for Bilingual Education  
 California Latino School Boards Association  
 Californians for Justice  
 Californians Together  
 Campaign for Quality Education  
 Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning Coalition for Educational Justice  
 Citizen Action of New York  
 Delawareans for Social and Economic Justice  
 Educate Our State  
 Education Voters Pennsylvania

Grow Your Own Illinois  
 Inner City Struggle  
 Justice Matters  
 Legal Advocates for Children and Youth  
 Montgomery County Education Forum  
 Parent-U-Turn  
 Parents for Unity  
 RYSE Center  
 San Francisco Teacher Residency  
 Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education  
 Young Voices Providence, Rhode Island  
 Youth On Board, Somerville, Massachusetts  
 Youth Together

## About the Coalition for Teaching Quality

The Coalition for Teaching Quality represents a broad cross-section of more than 100 local, state, and national organizations representing civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, and education groups. Formed in reaction to a provision of federal law that allowed teachers in training to be identified as “highly qualified” and concentrated in low-income, high-need schools with diverse learners, this group has developed a new, comprehensive framework for teaching quality that will allow the nation to put a fully prepared and effective educator in every classroom.





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