

# School Leadership Task Force



*A Union of Professionals*

## **Illinois Federation of Teachers Position Statement Improving School Leadership Preparation in Illinois**

The Illinois Federation of Teachers appreciates and understands the wide-ranging duties of today's school principals. Even with many and varied tasks, the focus is on increased pressure to improve teaching and learning. A school principal must be a team leader in creating a shared vision within the school community that engages and urges the school staff, parents, and the local community to implement a challenging high quality instructional program measured by improved student achievement.

The IFT has participated in multiple efforts to bring about change in the preparation of Illinois school principals including the Commission on School Leader Preparation in Illinois Colleges and Universities, the IL-State Action for Educational Leadership Project (IL-SAELP), and now the ISBE/IBHE School Leadership Task Force.

After reviewing numerous findings and recommendations, the IFT agrees that changes need to be made in the preparation of school leaders based on the following:

- Principal leadership must be correlated with student achievement growth.
- Admissions criteria should be restructured to ensure recruitment of high quality candidates who intend to be principals.
- Principal preparation programs must have PreK-12/20 teaching and learning as the central focus.
- Meaningful clinical and internship programs involving all stakeholder constituencies should be required of all candidates.
- Internship programs must have consistency of knowledge and skills at a benchmark level.
- Partnerships between districts and colleges/universities should be an integral part of preparation programs.
- A well-developed ongoing in-service support component, including research-based professional development, must be established.

- A rigorous state certification exam aligned with agreed-upon standards should be administered for those candidates seeking the Type 75 certificate to become principals.
- Principal candidates must have a minimum of four years of effective classroom teaching experience.

The IFT believes that perhaps the most neglected piece in the puzzle of principal preparation is training in how to set the tone or school climate and culture for successful teaching and learning. A respectful and supportive atmosphere must be established by the principal in collaboration with teachers and school-related personnel. The principal must recognize that the school extends beyond just classes — that it includes students' continuing social education through numerous extra-curricular activities, along with open communication with parents and other community members.

Finally, since 95 percent of Illinois school districts operate under collective bargaining agreements, the IFT strongly recommends that all preparation programs include basic training in the implementation of a collective bargaining agreement.

The success of an educational program depends upon the maximum utilization of the abilities of teachers and school related personnel and treatment of all staff as a team working toward a common goal – the education of all students. The staff must have a satisfaction with and appreciation of their working conditions, and should be assured of fair compensation and security in their profession. If we are to raise the standards of the teaching profession, we must go beyond the role-model of inspired missionary and move to dedicated, caring, talented and knowledgeable professionals. A properly-trained principal is an essential element of that team of professionals who make up a school staff.

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Jan. 3, 2008