

Managing Educator Talent

**PROMISING PRACTICES AND  
LESSONS FROM MIDWESTERN STATES**





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## Introduction

Educator quality is the single most important school-level contributor to student learning and achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). The recruitment, retention, and development of effective educators are perennial policy concerns for states, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects and geographic areas (Imazeki & Goe, 2009). Researchers propose many policies to rectify problems related to teacher and principal effectiveness and improve the delivery of education, ranging from better preparation and ongoing development to more competitive salaries and professional working environments. Often, however, these policies are designed piecemeal and lack alignment and cohesion.

This analysis contends that significant and sustained improvements in teacher and principal effectiveness will be achieved only if all key policies across the educator career continuum are addressed in a cohesive, aligned, and strategic manner. Learning Point Associates has identified the key policies and actions that together determine the level of effectiveness of an educator throughout his or her career. Managing Educator Talent<sup>SM</sup> refers to the components of the educator career continuum that must be addressed in a coherent manner to maximize the effectiveness of all educators. Policymakers should consider research and best practice to develop multifaceted reforms in the following areas:

- Preparation (including certification and licensure)
- Recruitment and hiring
- Induction and mentoring
- Professional development
- Compensation and other financial incentives
- Working conditions
- Performance management

Moreover, because these policy areas are interconnected, reforms must leverage resources across the system and build upon, not contradict or duplicate, other efforts.

To be effective, this holistic approach to improving educator quality must be embraced at all levels of governance. The U.S. Department of Education's competitive Race to the Top initiative is the most recent example of a federal incentive program geared toward promoting coordinated state reforms to educator quality policy. However, policymakers at the state and district levels also need to consider the educator career continuum holistically if teaching and learning in public schools are to improve. To do so, states must first examine the status quo of their educator talent management policies and fully understand the levers that influence the training, recruitment, hiring, development, and support of effective educators within their systems.

This policy analysis explains the need for a systemic approach to educator talent management. It then provides findings from a study of educator talent management systems in seven Midwestern states to illustrate regional trends in human capital management systems in education. Finally, the analysis offers recommendations for policymakers to move toward a more systemic educator talent management system.

## Educator Talent Management: A Systemic Approach

During the past decade, education stakeholders increasingly have perceived improvement in educator quality and effectiveness as a pathway to enhancing student learning and achievement. Subsequently, policy and programming were developed and amended to address individual components of the educator career continuum, such as preparation or professional development. These components are addressed at the district, state, and federal levels of governance. Despite this response, little is known about the range of strategies being implemented throughout the country or how they relate to one another (Rice, Roellke, Sparks, & Kolbe, 2009). Though many efforts exist to systemically review state policy in this area, none examine the *alignment* of educator talent management policies both horizontally (i.e., across the career continuum) and vertically (i.e., between levels of governance).

This analysis posits that the creation of a systemic approach to educator talent management—one that considers all components of the career continuum together, with specified roles for schools, districts, and states—falls under the purview of states and must be developed by state leadership across agencies and sectors.

### The State Role

Although states and districts have worked alongside one another to address pressing educator quality issues for many years, more recently, states have been recognized as change agents within the system. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the more recent provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 encourage the active involvement and leadership of states in planning, monitoring, and thinking innovatively about improving educator quality. As leaders of change in the education system, states need to make well-informed decisions based on evidence emerging from research and other states' experiences.

To effectively employ available resources, states need access to a set of policy options and supports for educator talent management. By examining the various ways in which states in the Midwest support the training, development, recruitment, and retention of high-quality educators, this analysis provides policymakers with perspectives and promising practices to better understand their options and assess their own state educator talent management systems. The analysis is intended to serve as a springboard for policy-oriented discussions about improving the quality of teachers and school leaders for all students through the systemic consideration of evidence related to all educator quality policy areas and the strategic alignment of multifaceted reforms.

### Taking Stock: Systemic Reviews of State Policy

Cross-state studies of educator quality policies are popular because they are both intrinsically interesting and practically useful as idea generators and measures for comparison. A number of organizations systematically compare state-level educator quality policies in some way. For example, *Quality Counts*, which is conducted annually by *Education Week's* Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (e.g., Editorial Projects in Education, 2009), grades all 50 U.S. states on a scale of *A* through *F* in several education categories, one of which is the teaching profession. Similarly, the *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*



published by the National Council on Teacher Quality (2008) grades each state on a scale of *A* through *F* on how well they achieve best practice in 15 teacher quality policy areas. However, neither *Quality Counts* nor the *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* addresses whether policies were developed in a cohesive and aligned manner.

Taking a different approach, the Strategic Management of Human Capital initiative at the Center for Policy Research in Education has conducted in-depth case studies of the human capital management systems in five large urban school districts, one state-level program, and several nonprofit education initiatives. These studies detail the variety of approaches employed to improve educator quality by enhancing recruitment and hiring processes, induction and mentoring programs, compensation initiatives, working conditions, and a number of other policy areas (Koppich & Showalter, 2008).

To better delineate innovative and effective practices in improving educator quality, Learning Point Associates developed a research-based framework, which allows states to compare policies with best practices throughout all phases of the educator career continuum. *Managing Educator Talent: A Research-Based Framework for District and State Policymakers*—also called the METworks<sup>SM</sup> Framework—enables policymakers to critically examine their educator talent management policies, consider pertinent components that are helpful in identifying current practices that might be shortchanging students, and create plans to address these gaps effectively (Behrstock, Meyer, Wraight, & Bhatt, 2009). The framework offers a systemic approach to improving teacher and school leader development, recruitment, and retention by ensuring that all integral functions of educator policy are connected and addressed. It also ensures that states are not disconnected from the local stewardship of managing educator talent within the education system. This analysis further contributes to this dialogue by examining issues related to the development of a systemic and aligned state educator talent management system.

## State Efforts to Prepare, Recruit, and Retain Talented Educators

This analysis highlights state-level policies that align with the METworks research-based best practices in the Midwest. Using data from a regional scan of seven Midwestern states' educator talent management policies conducted by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest, Learning Point Associates categorized policies that aligned with research-based best practices into the METworks components: preparation and licensure, recruitment and hiring, induction and mentoring, professional development, compensation and other financial incentives, working conditions, and performance management. To supplement this policy scan, interviews were conducted with state personnel to determine the context within which these policies were created. Interviewees were asked to comment on the impetus for policy development, stakeholder engagement, barriers and facilitators to implementation, and coordination of policy initiatives.

This analysis utilizes these collected data to highlight those state policies that represent research-based best practices supported by recommendations in the METworks Framework as well as states that are implementing innovative practices. The analysis also contextualizes the development process of these policies to provide policymakers with a richer understanding of options for policy and practice to improve educator quality.

### Preparation and Licensure

The educator career continuum begins with preparation. Although institutions of higher education (IHEs) directly administer preparation programs and districts may form partnerships and develop programs with IHEs, states have the authority to influence educator preparation through their boards of regents, boards of education, and legislative processes. These state agencies have the authority to carry out the following four overarching functions:

- Create educator standards.
- Regulate professional licensure.
- Influence the admission requirements, curricula, and data reporting requirements of educator preparation program providers.
- Create incentives for the preparation of teachers in specific shortage areas (e.g., hard-to-staff subject areas and schools).

One of the states included in the regional scan developed a new tiered licensure system that links the teacher evaluation system to continued licensure and professional development.

Table 1 summarizes the prevalence of state-level policies that relate to educator preparation in the Midwestern states in these functional areas.

**Table 1. State-Level Policies Related to Educator Preparation and Licensure**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Teacher licensure standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tiered system of licensure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Alignment of state licensure standards with program elements of IHEs	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Program or assessment criteria for admission of candidates to teacher preparation programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teacher preparation programs that require training in cultural competency		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Program standards, training, and professional development on working with diverse learners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requirements or criteria for field experience (student teaching)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Availability of a database and information on preparation programs and candidates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State-initiated study of teacher supply and demand	✓				✓	✓	✓
Programs focused on placement of highly skilled new teachers in hard-to-staff schools	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Programs to address teacher shortages (e.g., Troops to Teachers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaboration with IHEs in providing alternative certification and teaching degrees to meet shortage areas in core subjects	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Principal preparation standards, professional standards, or professional development standards			✓	✓			✓
Tuition waivers or scholarships for candidates committed to working in special education	✓	✓		✓			
Scholarships, financial incentives, or loan forgiveness for candidates committed to teaching in schools with high-minority student populations or in hard-to-staff schools	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

## Recruitment and Hiring

Though hiring takes place at the district level, state-level policies can and should proactively work to improve recruitment statewide, particularly in hard-to-staff areas. The following types of state-level recruitment policies were found in the Midwest:

- Support for teacher supply-and-demand studies to determine shortage areas
- Operation of an online job bank to facilitate the application process
- Alternative certification routes for career changers
- Administration of scholarships, tuition waivers, and loan forgiveness programs for shortage areas
- Support for recruitment programs that widen the educator candidate pool

A variety of influences led to the emergence of teacher and principal recruitment policies and initiatives at the state level in the Midwest:

- Reports produced by the education community, many of which focused on teacher shortages in content areas, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and special education
- Special-interest groups (e.g., community-based organizations, the business community) that proposed ideas to legislators
- Legislators' agendas
- Current provisions of ESEA
- Grant funding for recruitment initiatives

In one state, the impetus for resource-intensive policies in educator recruitment, such as tuition waivers, stemmed primarily from legislative action. Table 2 shows the prevalence of each of the previously mentioned types of policies in the Midwest.

**Table 2. State-Level Policies Related to Recruitment and Hiring**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Scholarships for effective prospective teachers to pursue a career in a hard-to-staff school	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Partnerships with international or domestic organizations to recruit foreign language teachers	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Programs that recruit career-changers to teaching (e.g., Troops to Teachers, Transition to Teaching)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Active recruitment, scholarships, or training of teachers from underrepresented and minority populations	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Online job bank to match qualified teacher candidates with schools and districts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Tuition waivers and scholarships for prospective teachers to pursue a career in special education	✓			✓	✓		
Collaboration with IHEs in providing alternative certification and teaching degrees to meet shortage areas in core subjects	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Programs to acknowledge and honor teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Published studies and data analysis on vacancies, subject-area shortages, and other information for assessing recruitment patterns	✓				✓	✓	✓
Programs to recruit paraprofessionals, parents, active community members, or retired people to be teachers in areas where teacher shortages exist	✓	✓		✓			
Programs to encourage high school students to consider careers in teaching	✓					✓	✓
School leadership standards	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Induction and Mentoring

Induction and mentoring programs help beginning teachers transition from a teacher preparation program to their work in a school district. Because of the role that induction and mentoring can play in increasing teacher retention, state-level policies often mandate and regulate induction and mentoring programs. All but one of the states reviewed in the study require an induction program for beginning teachers, yet the design and delivery of those induction services differs by state. For example, one state offers a Web-based option that disseminates information via the Internet, and another state works with teachers to develop a teaching portfolio during the two-year induction program. As shown in Table 3, Midwestern state requirements for induction were primarily related to the following areas: requirements for mentor teachers, certification and licensure tiers, state support for networks and partnerships, and induction and mentoring for school administrators.

Interviewees were extremely positive about the induction and mentoring programs in their respective states. For example, an interview respondent identified one state’s mentoring and induction program as a facilitator for recruiting teachers as well. A respondent from another state mentioned that because the importance of a comprehensive induction program is widely recognized, the state has recently begun discussions about extending the program from one year to two years. Despite these positive perceptions, funding is a major barrier to implementing such programs. In one state, a lack of funding has prevented the implementation of an induction program. As a result, districts work within their own capacities to provide induction to beginning teachers.

**Table 3. State-Level Policies Related to Induction and Mentoring**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Requirements for induction and mentoring of beginning teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Requirements for mentor teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Established guidelines for graduating teachers from one tier of certification to the next	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
State support for networks and partnerships that provide districts with resources, services, and identified best practices to support high-quality induction programs	✓			✓			✓
Requirements for induction, mentoring, and evaluation of performance for beginning administrators	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Standards for induction and mentoring that include program evaluation, highlight a community of learners, emphasize cultural proficiency, and promote administrative supports for programs				✓			
Grants to encourage districts to mentor new teachers with diverse backgrounds					✓		
Requirements for district-level induction and mentoring programs of probationary teachers tied to particular funding sources					✓		

### Professional Development

Professional development is a critical component of the ongoing growth of educators. Table 4 shows the state-level policies that guide the direction in which that growth occurs. In the Midwest, the following policies were found:

- Professional development requirements for licensure
- Alignment to state standards and goals
- Focus on development of mathematics and science teachers
- Partnerships with IHEs and other stakeholders
- Resource allocation to high-need schools

Though the majority of these requirements and guidelines refer to staff professional development, increasingly states create rules for administrator professional development as well. Recognizing the acute need for professional learning among those new to the profession, five states require that all beginning teachers and school administrators create professional development plans.

**Table 4. State-Level Policies Related to Professional Development**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Requirements for professional development plans for all new teachers and administrators	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Requirements for professional development guidelines for teachers and administrators moving from one tier of licensure to the next or for license renewal	✓				✓		✓
Alignment of professional development activities to state or national professional development and accountability standards			✓	✓		✓	
Guidelines on the use of state and district funds for professional development activities		✓			✓		
State-supported high-quality professional development for administrators and teacher leaders	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Job-embedded professional development specifically for mathematics and science teachers				✓	✓	✓	
Partnerships with IHEs that support the professional development needs of educators	✓	✓				✓	
State-supported committees or academies that engage various stakeholders in the support and evaluation of professional development efforts			✓		✓	✓	✓
Additional professional development funds for high-need schools						✓	✓

## Compensation and Incentives

Compensation and incentives affect the distribution and retention of teachers and school leaders as well as the decisions of highly talented individuals outside of the education field as to whether to join the teaching profession. The state role in educator compensation was historically limited to setting minimum salaries; many states, however, including those in the Midwest, have begun to view compensation policy more creatively. In the Midwest, state-level policies can be sorted into three categories:

- State-supported, district-run models of alternative compensation, such as the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) and Minnesota Quality Compensation (Q Comp)
- Career ladders
- Financial recruitment incentives

The prevalence of these policies across the region is summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5. State-Level Policies Related to Compensation and Incentives**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
District-level pay for performance allowed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District(s) or consortium of private schools in the state has alternative compensation structure, such as TAP, based on criteria that include student achievement gains	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Alternative teacher professional pay system providing incentives for participating in professional development activities						✓	
Development of career ladders and guidelines for incentives for lead and master teachers	✓					✓	✓
Scholarship programs, loan forgiveness, or stipends for teachers committed to teach special education at schools with a high-minority population, at hard-to-staff schools, or in STEM subjects	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Reimbursement of fees or incentives to teachers with advanced certification such as National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification			✓			✓	✓
Troops to Teachers program offering stipends or bonuses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Scholarship programs to encourage teachers from diverse backgrounds to join the teaching profession and work in high-need, high-minority schools	✓	✓					
Grants to districts committed to hiring minority school leaders and providing them with financial incentives		✓					

## Working Conditions

Research clearly suggests that working conditions influence educator recruitment and retention, especially in high-need schools and classrooms. Perhaps the most important aspect of working conditions is the competence, support, and attitudes of school leaders and teacher colleagues in the building. Thus, all efforts to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and school leaders discussed in this analysis have implications for improving working conditions.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of physical working conditions. In more than one state, financing of school construction and renovation was emphasized as a significant and necessary contribution. For example, one interview subject noted that in some rural communities, a “new school building becomes a source of pride” that “changes the spirit of the community” and helps the community to focus on education. An interview subject from another state praised the state’s school construction program as one that is highly regarded and administered well.

The state-level policies in the Midwest that relate specifically to working conditions can be categorized as follows:

- School climate and physical environment
- Scheduling
- Technological resources
- Student behavior

All states examined in this analysis are collective bargaining states in which several aspects of working conditions, such as planning time and work schedules, are negotiated at the district level. All seven states have labor laws in place requiring districts to participate in such negotiations and honor the resulting agreements. In some cases, the states set minimum standards for various aspects of working conditions that may be expanded through collective bargaining. Despite the strong role of local decision makers, states have taken action to address this critical educator talent management issue. Table 6 summarizes the prevalence of state-level policies related to working conditions in Midwest schools.

**Table 6. State-Level Policies Related to Working Conditions**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Laws or regulations requiring districts to comply with collective bargaining regulations and, if requested, negotiate on matters affecting teachers' working conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State-administered or state-supported student school climate survey or teacher work satisfaction survey	✓		✓			✓	✓
State-level efforts to reduce class sizes	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Laws or regulations requiring a duty-free lunch period for teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Laws or regulations requiring planning time for teachers					✓	✓	
State assistance with improving student, school, or district access to technological resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State-supported online resources available for educators to provide information on state standards and assistance with planning lessons		✓	✓			✓	✓
State-mandated student discipline policies that include regulations on bullying, harassment, and weapons and guidelines on suspensions and expulsions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Laws or regulations related to a teacher's right to use reasonable force against a student in self-defense or defense of others	✓	✓	✓				

## Performance Management

Performance management refers to the overall assessment of teacher or school leader effectiveness and the actions taken in response. States are beginning to play a larger role in educator performance management. Traditionally, evaluations were conducted under the purview of districts, and evaluation terms were negotiated locally between management and unions. Now, however, many states set minimum requirements for what educator evaluations should entail. One interviewee said that teacher evaluations are “still going to have to be bargained with unions” but that the state can “provide tools and incentivize districts to think about things differently.” Many of these state-level policies, such as guidelines for evaluations, are initiated at the state education agency (SEA). However, in some cases, the legislature also influences performance management policy. One respondent suggested that the legislature has made

efforts to soften evaluation requirements: “Teacher evaluation is unpopular, so the legislature wants to water [it down]... The legislature wants ‘teacher reflection’ to serve as the teacher evaluation piece [instead of more stringent criteria].”

Despite the controversy about which factors to incorporate in teacher evaluations (e.g., student growth measures, supervisor reports), all seven states require certified school district employees to be evaluated periodically. Many of the terms of evaluation, however, still are decided at the local level through collective bargaining. State-level educator evaluation requirements differ in what they emphasize.

In the Midwest, policies related to performance management primarily mandate the following:

- Components of educator evaluations (e.g., based in part on student achievement, includes classroom observations, written and conducted by trained individuals)
- Submission of professional development plans for state or district approval
- Alignment with professional development
- Alignment of principal evaluations with state standards for school leaders

Table 7 summarizes the prevalence of performance management policies in the region.

**Table 7. State-Level Policies Related to Performance Management**

	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
Requirements for all certified school district employees to be evaluated periodically	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requirements for evaluations of staff to be based in part on student achievement on tests, graduation rates, or other objective measures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requirements for evaluations to be written and conducted by trained individuals and to include a classroom observation	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Requirements for staff performance evaluation plans to be submitted to the state for approval	✓	✓					
Requirements for individual development plans for teachers in a probationary period	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Requirements for teacher evaluations to be linked to professional development	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Requirements for principal evaluations to be aligned with the state standards for school leaders	✓		✓		✓	✓	

## Promising Practices: Preparation

### Indiana Proposed Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability

The quality of preparation programs and licensure requirements for teachers and school leaders lays the foundation for and affects the entire trajectory of an educator's career. High-quality educator preparation programs can equip teachers and school leaders with the skills and knowledge that will jump-start a positive and rewarding career in education.

In order to better align Indiana's statewide educator preparation and licensure system with research-based best practices, the Indiana Department of Education has recently revised its preparation and licensure system called the Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability (REPA). The rules revise Title 515 in the *Indiana Register* to require preparation programs to emphasize content knowledge, create alternative certification routes for school administrators, implement more rigorous program entrance requirements, create a beginning teacher residency program, allow current teachers to use inservice credits for license renewal, reduce licensing categories from five to three, and devolve decisions about professional development to local building-level administrators.

## Key State Findings

The state policy inventory presented in this analysis demonstrates the policy commonalities and disparities that exist between states with respect to educator talent management. Perhaps most striking is the variance found within regions with similar demographic, governance, and historic characteristics. The following key findings reflect the overarching themes gleaned from the policy scan and interviews with state-level personnel.

In addition, “Promising Practices” are highlighted throughout this section. These policy and program highlights illustrate state innovations that are representative of emerging systemic approaches to improving educator quality in each phase of the career continuum. Exemplary programs and policies were chosen if they addressed and aligned more than one component of educator quality, they had demonstrated success in improving educator quality, and/or they represented a unique model for other states to consider moving forward. These highlighted policies serve as examples of entry points for embarking on comprehensive reforms to ensure that all students learn from effective educators.

### Finding 1: Leadership at high levels is critical to driving reforms in educator quality.

Creating and implementing a systemic approach to educator quality reform necessitates a well-defined mission with a strategic plan to achieve that mission. Executing such a plan, however, requires a capable leader who can effectively manage policy development while garnering support among constituents. Though a myriad of factors determine the shape of policy reform, policymakers perceive leadership to be the greatest indicator of whether a reform will be successful. The development of a systemic approach to managing educator talent requires leaders within and across agencies to create a singular vision, outline attainable but ambitious goals, and manage a team of talented individuals to implement a plan to achieve those goals. Leaders must be proactive about initiating reform instead of creating reactionary policy responses, as the latter is most likely to produce the types of fragmented systems that are less efficient and productive for educators.

Leaders at high levels assemble the work of others to achieve the cohesion of an effective systemic approach. Increasingly, policy related to educator quality originates from a variety of high-level sources, including SEAs, boards of regents, legislatures, and governors' offices. Policies also are increasingly coordinated between these governing bodies. This alignment, however, is

impossible to achieve without proactive, strong leadership at all levels of governance, particularly the highest levels. National organizations of state leaders, such as the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, recognize the importance of visible leadership in the area of educator quality improvement and support state leaders' capacity to create systems of educator development. These commitments must be followed by action from state leaders to drive systemic reforms in educator talent management.

**Finding 2: During the *initial* phases of policy development, broad stakeholder engagement is crucial.**

Education reform cannot be sustained in the long term without galvanizing the momentum and political will needed for success from a broad range of stakeholder and constituency groups. Stakeholder engagement is often viewed as the provision of information to constituents after a policy has already been developed. However, state personnel in the Midwest stressed the importance of strategically engaging stakeholders during the early stages of the policy development process. Identifying stakeholder groups early in the process and specifying roles for each group can be time consuming initially but will lead to greater success in policy implementation. Roles for stakeholder groups may range from communication with their constituents about the policy development process to involvement in partnerships and negotiations about the components of a particular policy.

The opportunity to provide input from day one is essential to garnering support and increasing stakeholder buy-in. Common formats used to increase support for educator talent management policies in the Midwest include task forces, small-group meetings, informational sessions, and public forums. All relevant stakeholders should be involved in the development of educator talent management initiatives: SEAs, legislatures, governors' offices, intermediary education agencies, school districts, IHEs, school and district administrators, professional organizations, unions, the business community, community organizations, charter and independent school associations, and most important, teachers themselves. Teachers and school leaders from diverse backgrounds—veteran and novice, from high-need and low-need schools—should genuinely inform systemic policy development. Leaders must identify key issues for each of these groups and work intentionally to develop buy-in from each group.

## Promising Practices: Recruitment

### Illinois Grow Your Own Program

To improve the pool of high-quality, effective educator candidates for all students, states must actively support the development of a world-class educator workforce by promoting the teaching profession and actively recruiting educators to teach in hard-to-staff geographic and subject areas.

The Illinois Grow Your Own Teacher Education Act (110 Ill. Comp. Stat. 48) was enacted by the state legislature in 2004 to prepare highly skilled, committed teachers who will teach in hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff positions for the long term. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) administers the initiative as a grant competition to fund consortia that will carry out Grow Your Own Teacher preparation programs, which train individuals who have previous ties to the community in which they will work as certified teachers.

As of February 2009, the Grow Your Own coalition involved 16 community partnerships, eight public universities, four private colleges or universities, 12 community colleges, 23 school districts, and two unions (Grow Your Own Illinois, 2009a). More than 500 candidates are "in the pipeline" to become fully accredited classroom teachers (Grow Your Own Illinois, 2009b). The initiative has continued to expand and add programs since its enactment. For more information, visit <http://www.growyourownteachers.org/index.htm>.

## Promising Practices: Induction and Mentoring

### Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative

Induction programs that build on educator preparation programs produce teachers and school leaders who are better equipped for the challenges they face, become more effective more quickly, and are more likely to remain in the profession.

The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative PI 34 instituted a requirement that school districts must provide all beginning educators with a support system. According to the administrative rules, the support system must include the following: ongoing orientation, support seminars, a qualified mentor for each beginning educator who has been trained to contribute to the formative assessment of beginning educators, and an administrator who has been trained in the Professional Development Plan team process.

To support districts in this work, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction developed a state-level induction model and examples of promising practices. For more information on the initiative, including state guidelines, best practices, and resources, visit <http://dpi.wi.gov/Tepdl/wimprograms.html>.

**Finding 3: Barriers to the implementation of systemic educator talent management policies can be overcome through increased collaboration among SEAs and other stakeholders.**

Undoubtedly, stakeholders encounter many political, logistical, and other challenges to the creation and implementation of an educator talent management system that aligns components of the educator career continuum in a cohesive manner. However, state personnel in the Midwest believe that many of these barriers (e.g., lack of resources, difficulty establishing priorities, high administrator turnover, and local control policies) can be overcome with creative solutions.

For example, collaborative efforts and strategic partnerships can reduce the burden of resources on one agency or organization. Such collaboration capitalizes on existing relationships and resources to maximize efficiencies and further reduce financial and personnel burdens. The State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) funded by The Wallace Foundation is one example of how states can benefit from external funding and collaborative, strategic partnerships (see Finding 5 for more information). In addition, clear, transparent communication about the policy development process with external groups builds trust among partners, which is vital to successful policymaking. Finally, the use of technology to engage stakeholders and partners can further facilitate communication while reducing budgetary strain. For example, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) developed training videos to aid educators in creating their professional development plans and posted them on the DPI website so that all educators throughout the state could access them. These are only some examples provided by Midwest state personnel to overcome obstacles; certainly many other solutions exist. The underlying message, however, remains that although obstacles can hinder or slow down the policy development process, state personnel must strive to find creative solutions to achieve the end result. Policymakers must not let obstacles derail them from the ultimate goal of ensuring effective educators for all students.

**Finding 4: Breaking down interdepartmental silos will facilitate the coordination of policy initiatives.**

As evidenced by findings from the regional policy scan and interviews with state personnel, collaboration not only among but also within state agencies is essential to successful policy development. However, collaboration will not happen spontaneously or as a result of individual

efforts and relationships. Instead, systemic avenues, such as cross-organizational structures, must exist for meaningful, productive collaboration to occur. Statewide coordination of educator talent management in SEAs throughout the Midwest seems to be increasing as interdepartmental silos break down and communication structures materialize. In Minnesota, for example, a working group convened to redesign the teacher preparation program approval process through the Minnesota Board of Teaching has consulted with the Minnesota Department of Education to link data on teacher graduates with K–12 schools and districts. Personnel in Michigan also cited the Race to the Top application as an impetus for working cross-organizationally to align professional development, licensure, and preparation initiatives.

The Data Quality Campaign calls for similar cross-organizational structures in the area of data governance. A data governance strategy that breaks down traditional silos within and across departments will, according to the Data Quality Campaign, improve quality and create efficiencies (Laird & Reyna, 2008). If states are committed to developing an effective educator talent management system that strategically leverages available resources to meet the end goals of developing, employing, and maintaining effective educators, then cross-departmental and cross-organizational structures must exist to facilitate the coordination of policy initiatives. Examples of such organizations that exist in the Midwest include education roundtables (e.g., Indiana’s Education Roundtable), monthly leadership meetings among agency heads, and cross-functional departments dedicated to improving teacher quality (e.g., Ohio’s Office of Educator Quality). Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin also have P–20 working groups in which issues of educator preparation and professional development are addressed. For example, the Minnesota College Readiness Consortium is the coordinating agency for the Minnesota P–20 Education Partnership and also coordinates the Minnesota Principal’s Academy, a training academy that aligns principal professional development and preparation to statewide goals. These structures create opportunities for state personnel to build relationships and collaborate to achieve a common goal.

**Finding 5: Programs geared toward recruiting, developing, and supporting school leaders do not exist to the same extent as programs for teachers, if at all.**

School leadership quality is the second most important school-level influence (after teacher quality) on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). However, a recent study suggests that only 50 percent

## Promising Practices: Professional Development

### Iowa Professional Development Model

High-quality professional development is ongoing, job-embedded, and differentiated for all staff and faculty (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008). The Iowa Professional Development Model exhibits these qualities.

Created by the Iowa Department of Education in collaboration with various stakeholders, the Iowa Professional Development Model focuses on improving student learning and engages all educators in intensive, collaborative professional development. The model provides districts with guidance for designing, implementing, and evaluating the district professional development plan. Professional development plans are a required component of district comprehensive improvement plans.

The model further requires individual teacher professional development plans, which must be aligned with the Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria and the school improvement plan. The model also requires individual administrator professional development plans, which must be aligned with the Iowa School Leadership Standards and the school improvement plan. For more information about the Iowa Professional Development Model, visit <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/pdmtm/state.html>.

## Promising Practices: Compensation and Incentives

### Minnesota Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q Comp)

Compensation and other incentives can be a vital policy lever to developing, supporting, and retaining high-quality, effective educators. The Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q Comp) program in Minnesota rewards teachers financially for several activities and accomplishments, including job-embedded professional development.

Q Comp is a comprehensive, district-based, voluntary program for educator talent management that encompasses several areas of the educator career continuum—professional development, teacher performance evaluation and management, and performance pay. Based loosely on the Teacher Advancement Program model, Q Comp is tailored to meet the needs of districts and schools. Each district or charter school can apply with a locally designed Q Comp plan developed with the input of multiple stakeholders that complies with state regulations. For more information on the Q Comp program, visit [http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher\\_Support/QComp/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/QComp/index.html).

of newly hired high school principals stay for three years and that less than 30 percent stay for five years, with retention rates lower in low-performing and economically disadvantaged schools (Fuller & Young, 2009). Unfortunately, policies and initiatives aimed at addressing school leader quality are noticeably lacking compared with those that focus on teacher quality. Nearly all Midwestern states have standards for school leaders, and the majority of states require professional development for and evaluations of school administrators. However, there are remarkably few initiatives aimed at improving the preparation, recruitment, hiring, induction, working conditions, or compensation for principals despite evidence that these factors strongly influence decisions to become school leaders (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009).

Of the initiatives that do exist to support school leaders, SAELP, funded by The Wallace Foundation, is currently being implemented in six of the seven Midwestern states studied: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The goal across all 22 states funded through this program is the same—to develop and support effective leaders in the education system with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. However, the mechanism and structures by which this goal is accomplished varies by state.

In Ohio, for example, SAELP funds a partnership between the Ohio Department of Education, five school districts (Akron, Cleveland Heights–University Heights, Canton, Toledo, and Youngstown), and five IHEs (Antioch McGregor University, Ohio Dominican University, Kent State University, University of Cincinnati, and Wright State University). The goal of the partnership is to improve student achievement by increasing district and school leadership quality through an internally developed leadership system, which outlines the state, district, and SAELP roles with respect to standards, training, and conditions necessary for educator success. SAELP in Ohio relies on the Ohio Leadership Development Framework developed by the Ohio Department of Education to bring together urban educators—including administrators, teachers, and union leaders—to participate in professional development opportunities during which they learn to share and utilize data and leadership best practices. Another major initiative funded by SAELP in Ohio is Ohio Urban Principal Endorsement. Through this initiative, the Ohio Department of Education is developing an urban principal training program and endorsement credential that will identify promising candidates and provide them with training to become certified principals with an urban leadership endorsement.



SAELP-funded projects are one way in which the career continuum for school leaders is being addressed at the state-level. However, states also must be willing to invest financial and personnel resources and prioritize school leadership as an integral component to improving educator quality. This attention to school leader quality is especially necessary in light of the importance that teachers attach to their school leaders. For example, in a teacher survey, conducted as part of the Retaining Teacher Talent Study (Learning Point Associates & Public Agenda, 2009), working with a principal who really helps teachers improve their effectiveness was cited by 38 percent of teachers who intended to leave the profession as a factor that would *definitely* change their minds about leaving and was cited by an additional 29 percent of such teachers as a factor that *might* change their minds (Public Agenda, 2009). By better managing talent at the leadership level, states can simultaneously improve the retention, morale, and effectiveness of teachers.

### Finding 6: States vary greatly in their ability to project educator supply and demand.

The ability to gauge the supply and demand of educators is critical for a state concerned with ensuring effective teachers and principals for all students. High-quality information about supply and demand allows for targeted investments to address areas of shortage, and in cases in which shortages are found to exist, it provides evidence to support the case for greater investment in the teacher workforce—a case that is sometimes brushed aside due to its costliness and lack of immediate returns.

Historically, states have attempted to determine levels of teacher supply and demand periodically, but in the past decade, such practice has become systematic (annually or biannually) in some states in the Midwest. Lindsay, Wan, and Gossin-Wilson (2009) find that these studies tend to be conducted to comply with state or federal statutes and can cost up to \$35,000. Some states provide information only on the number of uncertified or out-of-field teachers. Some states project student enrollment and teacher retirement information. Other states collect no information at all. Most states emphasize teacher supply, with only two states in the Midwest attempting to forecast the demand for teachers. If states do not ascertain the demand for teachers, they will encounter challenges in determining whether supply meets demand and whether action needs to be taken to recruit and retain more teachers (Behrstock, 2009). Therefore, states should articulate their projected demand for teachers and collect and publish meaningful data on whether the supply of teachers meets this demand.

## Promising Practices: Working Conditions

### Ohio Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey

Nearly every study that addresses educator attrition discusses the significance of working conditions. The aspects of working conditions that emerge from the literature relate to school culture, support, student discipline, workload, and the physical school buildings in which educators work. All these aspects of an educator's working environment can affect recruitment, performance, and retention.

Recognizing the importance of this component, Ohio administers the Ohio Teaching and Learning Conditions survey periodically to assess teachers' perceptions of their working conditions. Every school and district with a satisfactory response rate receives a customized report, along with resources developed by the Ohio Department of Education and its partners. The goal of survey administration is to use data to inform school improvement planning, faculty conversation, community engagement, and consideration of district and state policies and programs. The survey is supported by a consortium of partners, including the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Education Association, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, and the Center for Teaching Quality.

## Promising Practices: Performance Management

### Iowa Administrator Evaluation

Throughout the Midwest and in much of the country, advances in teacher talent management are not mirrored by advances in school leader talent management, but Iowa is an exception. In 2007, Iowa created the Administrator Quality Program to improve student achievement by enhancing the quality of Iowa public school leaders. Specifically, the program requires adherence to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders as a minimum basis for administrator evaluation and professional development plans and improvement in mentoring and induction programs, professional development, and evaluations (Iowa Administrative Code 281-83.8).

The legislation that drives this program stipulates that, after their initial year as administrators, career administrators are evaluated annually on the basis of the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders. The law also requires, at minimum, that new administrators have an evaluation during their initial year of employment. After the initial summative evaluation, the law requires an annual formative assessment on the principals' individual professional development plan. The three-year summative evaluation requires documentation of competence on the six standards, meeting of district expectations drawn from the district's comprehensive school improvement plan and building improvement plan, individual professional development plan attainment, and other supporting documentation. The evaluation is required to provide opportunities for personal and professional growth and must be ongoing and connected to school improvement goals.

For more information on Iowa's innovative performance management system for school leaders, visit [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1447&Itemid=2448](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1447&Itemid=2448).

**Finding 7: States only minimally monitor how well their investments in educator quality policies achieve their intended goals.**

Evaluation of initiatives is necessary to make informed decisions about program effectiveness and whether programs should be expanded, discontinued, or revised (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). However, often evaluations are conducted only when mandated for compliance reasons. In the area of educator quality, states only minimally assess the extent to which educator quality policies achieve their intended goals. Though program evaluations and data usage exist in some states in the area of educator quality, there is little evidence that evaluations or collected data will be used to better inform policymaking or improve programs or policies. Consequently, states have difficulty assessing the effects or characteristics of a particular program or policy in terms of scope, participants, resources, duration, outcomes, and so on. Policymakers must seek to develop consensus about the best measures to determine whether a program or policy is effective and then make those results transparent to the public. In addition to monitoring policies and programs, state leaders should monitor the alignment and comprehensiveness of their educator talent management system.

## Moving Toward an Aligned Educator Talent Management System

### Implications for Policymakers

Given the findings and promising practices highlighted in this policy analysis, proactive leadership clearly is needed to lead collaborative efforts in creating systemic approaches to educator talent management. The following recommendations provide considerations and next steps for state policymakers in moving toward a more cohesive, aligned, and intentional system of developing, recruiting, and retaining effective educators for all students.

**Recommendation 1: Assess the status quo of your educator quality policies.** In order to determine what changes must be made, policymakers must first understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system. Policymakers should ask how current policies compare with research-based best practices and examine ways in which a systemic initiative might build on previous efforts. One such example is *A METworks<sup>SM</sup> Regional Summary: Educator Talent Management in the Midwest* (Bhatt et al., 2009). This regional summary draws from METworks reports produced for each state that compare states' policies with the research-based best practices as put forth in the METworks Framework.

**Recommendation 2: Create a cross-organizational team to develop a unified vision and strategic plan for educator quality in your state.** As evidenced by findings in the Midwest, states need to develop structures within and across agencies that allow for more collaboration regarding the issue of educator quality. Policymakers must create periodic, systematic opportunities to develop partnerships and encourage trust between stakeholders instead of relying on ad hoc relationships for policy development.

**Recommendation 3: Identify all stakeholder groups and partners and specify the level of engagement for each group at every stage of the policy development process.** Leaders of policy initiatives should be aware of all stakeholder groups that need to be involved in the development process and then determine the best strategy for engagement. The plan for stakeholder engagement must be explicitly stated, with clear roles defined for individuals and stakeholder groups. In addition, all levels of engagement—from the provision of information to involvement in networking and active partnerships—should be considered.

**Recommendation 4: Focus on the development of school leaders as well as teachers.** Though much of the research on educator quality focuses on the importance of high-quality, effective teachers, emerging literature suggests that school leadership is also an imperative component for providing high-quality education to students. State policymakers must think strategically about the development of school leaders and teachers in each area of the career continuum. Perhaps most important, policies for school leaders and teachers must be aligned with one another to ensure that all educators are working toward the same common vision.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure that all initiatives to improve educator quality will be assessed on how well they meet the intended goal.** As with any state initiative in which significant resources are invested, monitoring and evaluation of efforts to systemically improve educator quality are critical to the development of effective policies. Policymakers must commit resources and personnel to assess the extent to which the intended goals are being met. Furthermore, assessment must be part of the policy dialogue from the beginning so that achievable, measurable results can be identified and studied.

### The Need for Action

Although the education field is diverse and expansive, all stakeholders are working toward the common purpose of improving student learning and offering more opportunities for student success. Increasingly, stakeholders also are working with the common presumption that highly effective teachers and school leaders are the key to helping students succeed. Some may champion one idea for improving educator effectiveness and some another, but to create an education system that works for all learners, leaders must be able to understand how individual policy levers work as a cohesive whole to improve or hinder educator quality.

Most citizens currently look to their state leaders to make genuine advances in the quality of educators and the public education system. The only way states can ensure such advancement is by comprehensively addressing the whole educator quality policy spectrum—from preparation and recruitment to compensation and working conditions to evaluations and the hiring or termination of educators. This policy analysis shed light on how these educator quality improvement goals can be accomplished by highlighting the experiences of the Midwestern states. By continually sharing ideas and experiences with one another, states can gain knowledge about what works in systemic educator talent management and continue to build momentum in addressing this long-standing issue of critical importance.

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