Expanding Effective Practices in Teaching and Leadership

Research Lessons and State Examples from a NASBE Forum
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To discuss the state role in building human capacity, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), in partnership with the National Consortium* and with support from The Wallace Foundation, convened 20 state board of education members from across the country** alongside 20 invited policy and educational experts in March 2010 for a full-day forum on Expanding Effective Practices in Teaching and Leadership to Promote Student Learning. This Issue Brief is derived from the presentations and discussions that took place during this meeting.

I. The Key Role of Teaching and Leadership in State Improvement Efforts

Policymakers recognize that we will not produce real improvements in America’s classrooms without great leaders and great teachers. That the priority of “improving teacher and principal effectiveness” was the “single biggest, and thus most important category for states” on the Race to the Top application brings attention to what we’ve learned about school improvement and system building over decades of education reform.¹

Research has consistently found leadership to be a critical investment; in order to make good on other reforms, there must be strong leaders in place. Indeed, there are virtually no examples of schools being turned around without strong leaders.² Furthermore, there are clear connections between leaders and the most decisive input to student achievement: teacher quality. Recent studies illustrate that leaders are at the center of teacher performance and play critical roles in determining where teachers will teach, the culture of and satisfaction they have with the schools in which they teach, and whether or not they will stay in the profession.³, ⁴ Efforts to improve student achievement in the United States rely on human capacity—our schools need strong leaders of strong instructional teams in order to succeed.

Unfortunately, while a great deal is known about what is needed to improve schools and many “islands of excellence” can be heralded, there are fewer examples of improvement strategies that have been implemented effectively across large numbers of schools. One important reason for this is that we are currently in an era of transformation in terms of what we expect from:

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*The National Consortium includes four state policymaker-serving associations: NASBE, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

**Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, and Wyoming.
• **Schools:** the mission of schools has been reoriented to prepare all students to become college- and career-ready global citizens; and

• **School leaders:** the role of school leaders has also been redefined from managerial taskmasters to instructionally focused facilitators of leadership teams; and

• **Teachers:** more than ever, today’s teachers are expected to move their classes toward defined outcomes using a full basket of instructional strategies tailored to the needs of individual students and to continually refine their practice using formative assessments and assessment data.

State boards of education have unique authority to respond to the needs for school staff and structure by rethinking the policies that direct the development and practices of teachers and leaders.

To identify lessons learned from large-scale efforts to spread educational reforms, particularly those focused on educator development and school organizational design, NASBE invited Susan Bodilly from RAND Education, Catherine Augustine, also from RAND, and Brian Rowan from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) to present at a topical forum. Throughout the morning, the three presenters shared findings and engaged with participants around important factors to consider in leveraging widespread improvements.

In the afternoon, in order to connect research to reality, participants heard from two states and a district that have made considerable progress in developing the policies and conditions needed for transformational change that were talked about in the morning sessions. In a moderated panel led by Wallace Senior Program Officer Jody Spiro, leaders from Kentucky, Louisiana, and Springfield, Massachusetts shared examples of how policymakers can devise coordinated systems of policies that explicitly and consistently communicate the kind of leadership and teaching needed to create powerful learning environments.

Finally, making a necessary leap to the questions state leaders need to answer to close the gap between what we know works and what actually happens on a day-to-day basis in schools, participants were organized in small groups to study vignettes and address key questions around fostering norms of effective instruction and spreading them in practices statewide.

This brief is organized around the key takeaways from the research presentations and conversations throughout the day-long forum. It integrates examples from the state and district panel to provide insight into how these lessons have been applied on the ground. The brief concludes with questions to move state leaders forward as they look to identify and connect the broad but interrelated levers impacting teacher and leader effectiveness under their authority.

### II. What is “Scaling”? Critical Considerations and Cautions about the Process of Spreading Practices

The concept of scaling has been receiving considerable attention in the education community. Susan Bodilly, Director of RAND Education, defined the process of “scaling up” as moving an “innovative intervention” that has proved successful from a sheltered environment into considerably more units or sites.* The concept of scale-up includes: increasing the number of sites that are adopting the innovation; ensuring significant improvements in practices that lead to improved student performance; ensuring sustainability or putting in place the policy infrastructure that can support continuing improvements; and shifting ownership from the original developers to the adopting sites.

The process of scaling holds tremendous potential for responding to far-reaching problems like the declining international status of American schools and the massive achievement gaps within them. It is clearly needed if we are going to ensure that all schools have leaders and teachers who use effective practices. However,

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* Classrooms, schools, districts, or states
effectively scaling something is not easy. It is not enough to merely spread practices. The initial selection must be appropriate, and there must be a structure that ensures the practice is faithfully replicated. Once in place in varied settings, the scaled practice must ultimately work for students—it must lead to improvements in classroom practice. This may seem obvious, but it is not simple to achieve.

Scaling requires collaboration and trust. In order to set up initiatives that can be scaled and sustained over the long term, political will must be established. Research affirms that this level of mutual engagement is a prerequisite to the difficult tasks of weeding out old practices and building the infrastructure necessary to shift ownership of new concepts to the site level. Based on the study results shared by Dr. Bodilly, arguably most important is the attention policymakers lend to the supportive conditions that enable something to go to scale. These conditions, rather than the interventions themselves, are what get adapted on a site-to-site basis. The right conditions can ensure that the practices become ingrained in the culture of the system and will continue even in the face of staff turnover.

For example, Kentucky, whose story was showcased by a panel later in the day, faced the loss of key staff, including the state commissioner of education and the superintendent of the largest district, during the course of its effort to build policies to improve the practices of teachers and leaders. But this possible setback did not stall progress because strong teams on the ground owned the reform as much as the state and district leaders.

To illustrate the dynamic between structure and flexibility in scaled-up interventions and conditions, Dr. Bodilly shared a recent evaluation conducted for a middle school literacy coaching model in Florida. The decision to move the intervention statewide was based on promising results in several districts. Yet, once implemented, results showed no significant effects. Further examination of the nature of the coaching and the environments where this practice took place clarify the impact.

Coaching itself was indeed a promising practice; however, the core tasks of scale up were not adequately addressed (see chart 1 below). For one,

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**Key Takeaway 1:** Before we put new policies and practices in place, we need to ensure they are effective. While this step may seem obvious, it is frequently overlooked.

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**Chart 1: Core Tasks and Challenges of Scaling Effective Instructional Practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Tasks</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide support for implementation</td>
<td>Creating economical supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure high quality implementation</td>
<td>Developing procedures for implementation checks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate and improve the intervention</td>
<td>Assessing effectiveness</td>
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<td>Obtain the financial support needed</td>
<td>Adapting funding over time as needs change</td>
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<td>Build organizational capacity for scale</td>
<td>Creating training programs</td>
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<td>Market the product (i.e., convince people that this practice will work for them)</td>
<td>Creating thoughtful customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create customized approaches to fit the needs of different sites</td>
<td>Adapting the intervention over time to meet needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustain the reform over time</td>
<td>Maintaining interests</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Slide adapted from Susan Bodilly, “Bringing Educational Quality to Scale,” presentation to NASBE (Washington, DC: March 17, 2010).
the literacy coaches’ time needed to be protected. Procedures needed to be enacted and managed reliably to prevent the added staff—who were often placed in under-resourced schools—from being pulled away to take on administrative demands. Additionally, the value of the literacy coach fundamentally resided in the process of analyzing data with teachers and providing guidance on making sense of the data and determining next steps to boost student outcomes. However, when timely access to data was compromised at the state level, the potential value of developing teachers’ capacity to use data was stalled. Thus, the process of spreading a practice across a state involves careful attention to the quality of the surrounding supports needed to enable the intervention to take hold and continue growing in effectiveness over time.

The coaching scenario in Florida is echoed by the lessons from larger efforts, such as those Dr. Bodilly found in research on comprehensive school reform. Standards-based reform can improve student achievement, but not if leaders stop after saying, “we’ve adopted content standards and tests and now we are going to hold teachers accountable.” Much like lack of attention to conditions that thwarted the attempt to scale literacy coaching in Florida, Bodilly said that to realize the positive outcomes of standards-based reform, leaders must ensure that the state-level vision is coupled with curriculum frameworks, specific professional development, and new data collection and dissemination systems with training on the meaning of data and how to use it appropriately.

III. What are “Cohesive Leadership Systems”? Strategies for States to Promote Integrated, Lasting Changes in Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

The need to pay attention to many factors at once and very intentionally address how they are related to achievement results underlies The Wallace Foundation’s 10-year investment in school leadership. When the Foundation began its work in this area a decade ago, it recognized system fragmentation as a problem shared by many state and district systems, one that was impeding large-scale efforts to improve school leadership. The rationale thus emerged that if states and districts could deliberately address the coordination that was historically lacking in their systems, then lasting gains in school leadership could be attained.

The Foundation solidified this approach as the “cohesive leadership system” (CLS). The concept presumes that wide-scale efforts to improve school systems are most likely to be successful and sustained if all levels of public education (state, district, and school) unite around the goal of improved student learning and interconnect the policies that address who leads schools, what leaders are expected to do, how they are trained, and the conditions* surrounding leaders’ work. As Wallace Senior Program Officer Jody Spiro said during her panel’s session, “You can train leaders well, but if they get into a system that constrains them in all sorts of ways, then they can’t put what they’ve learned into practice.”

Therefore, the CLS aims to be both comprehensive and “aligned.” Alignment refers to the relationship between state-, district-, and school-level initiatives (vertical alignment), as well as the degree to which various efforts at the same level are working to reinforce one another because they are deliberately developed using shared goals, language, understanding, and accountability (horizontal alignment).

Key Takeaway 2: In order to spread promising practices and uphold their benefits over the long haul, policymakers must identify and address supporting and undermining conditions.

* Conditions include, but are not limited to: timely and accurate data, increasing the authority, autonomy, and accountability of principals, human resources systems, and resource allocation.
Beginning a decade ago, Wallace supported 24 states and a number of districts in their efforts to develop cohesive leadership systems. To investigate how well this group succeeded in addressing the coordination of standards, preparation, and the conditions and incentives the CLS promotes as integral for significant, lasting change in the quality of leaders, the Foundation recently commissioned a study by the RAND Corporation, *Improving School Leadership: The Promise of Cohesive Leadership Systems*, which examined 10 of these states and 17 of the districts.

The report’s lead author, Catherine Augustine, presented findings from the report at the NASBE forum, including the extent of validation her research found for the CLS hypothesis:

1. If states and districts work together to create positive conditions, then there will be payoffs in terms of more time spent on instructional leadership.

2. In order to create positive conditions, states and districts will need to work together to build coordinated systems.

In addition to the specific policy work around leadership (see chart 2, opposite), the RAND report noted that states used a number of more general strategies to build cohesion—strategies important to the Forum’s discussion around scaling improvement efforts. These strategies include:

- Identifying strong individuals with political and social capital to lead the work;
- Building trust between states and districts;
- Creating formal and informal networks;
- Fostering communication;
- Exerting pressure and influence;
- Promoting improved quality and continuous improvement;
- Building capacity for the work; and
- Connecting to other reform efforts.

For examples of how states and districts in the Wallace network used each of these strategies, please see the Appendix.

Interestingly, Dr. Augustine noted a convergence between traditional roles of the state and the district in sites engaged in cohesive leadership system building. Districts are getting into preservice, working alongside universities in developing and staffing programs. At the same time, states are entering the traditionally district-dominated domain of evaluation and mentoring.

One example of this is in Springfield, Massachusetts. There, a statewide initiative in 2000 provided an incentive and positive climate for districts and nonprofits to develop their own alternative models for leader preparation. The alternatives were required to meet the same standards as higher education programs, but the standards were revamped to be fewer in number and stronger in focus. Through this initiative Springfield developed its own district-based preparation program, which gave the district autonomy to certify its own leaders through a preparation program tailored to its urban context. Over time this remolding of roles has benefitted all parties by generating more meaningful collaboration across the state, district, and local university players (for more details, see #7 in the Appendix).

Overall, Dr. Augustine said that her team found compelling evidence of the positive impacts of improving the conditions facing school leaders. Those conditions include sufficient autonomy, access to data, staff, and other resources. When principals were satisfied with their conditions, RAND researchers found that they spend more time on instructional leadership. Furthermore, those principals working in sites with more cohesive leadership systems reported that some of their conditions were more positive than those facing principals in less cohesive sites. The

**Key Takeaway 3:** Establish distributive leadership systems so that if any organization loses power or funding, or if any individual moves on, the effort doesn’t regress or lose momentum.
form group reported greater authority around hiring teachers, determining school schedules, and defining student achievement goals than principals in sites characterized by less cohesion. However, Dr. Augustine offered several caveats that must be factored as well. First, she said, the RAND study did not measure impacts on student achievement. (However, past research has found a link between instructional leadership and improved student achievement.) Additionally, much like the point made by Dr. Bodilly earlier about the importance of selecting a good policy to begin with before scaling, the same tenet can be expanded to cohesion. Cohesion is not an unqualified good: cohesion must be built around good policies.

Finally, two other related points are worth mentioning. First, for states or districts, full cohesion is rare, complex, challenging, and time-consuming to maintain. Second, if states or districts can’t realistically aspire to a CLS, improvements can still be made to the system, for example by improving principal training programs, mentoring novice principals, and developing principal evaluation systems.

IV. Is Large-Scale Instructional Change Possible? What Can Be Learned from Comprehensive School Reform

Participants at the forum had heard from Dr. Bodilly about the importance of selecting good policies initially and then scaling the practices and adapting the supports to multiple sites. Similarly, Dr. Augustine explained the need for multiple good policies to be coordinated and supported through collaborative relationships. Yet, additional research suggests that even if states attend very carefully to these two pieces of advice, this may not be enough to significantly move their systems ahead.
Thus, selecting a “good” policy will not translate to “good” implementation on its own, Brian Rowan of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan emphasized. His presentation focused on the high level of specificity required when applying school improvement interventions that rely on the actions of teachers and leaders to promote student learning.

Dr. Rowan led the CPRE study of another “cohesive” design aimed to promote instructional change in schools—comprehensive school reform. Comprehensive school reform has essentially been an effort to scale a particular reform model at the school level to multiple sites. A number of different reform models have been used, and the CPRE study looked at three well-known literacy intervention programs: the Accelerated School Program, America’s Choice, and Success for All. All three were built around distinctive instructional designs and relied on different organizational processes to generate instructional improvement. The results, which found varying degrees of success in both the extent of instructional change that was seen in participating teachers and the effects on student achievement, have important implications for policymakers as they invest in scaling reform models to improve the quality of teacher and leader practices in schools statewide.

According to Dr. Rowan, only America’s Choice and Success for All produced outcomes that were significantly different from control schools, and between these two interventions there were significant differences in the impact on student achievement. The Accelerated School Program believed in autonomy and the unique circumstances in any given school, so its program encouraged teachers to discover on their own innovative approaches to student learning. This organic approach to creating “powerful” learning environments did not produce a distinct “instructional regime.” While there were lots of conversations among teachers, there was insufficient structure in these protocols. The lesson here is that the schools needed to provide clear guidance to professional communities in how to identify effective practices and get teachers to share these practices in ways that were meaningful and could impact student learning.

In contrast to the adaptive approach fostered by schools in the Accelerated School Program, the America’s Choice and Success for All schools in the study bought into the idea that schools are more similar than not, and that they can best be improved through implementing routines developed by the reform model. Both of these interventions configured a more programmatic approach with more specific parameters. In America’s Choice, this came in the form of professional controls. America’s Choice schools adopted an explicit model of instruction and held leaders and other experts responsible for ensuring consistency in what curriculum was taught, how teaching looked, and how learning was assessed. In contrast to the Accelerated School Program, leaders at America’s Choice schools did not assume that effective teaching approaches would emerge spontaneously. Cohesion was created through monitoring, coaching, and continually evaluating teachers, all based on how well they were implementing the initial model of instruction. Similarly, Success for All held specific expectations for teachers, but schools with this program established procedures around specific instructional skills through scripts rather than people.

The degree of specificity in Success for All and America’s Choice schools generated substantial

Key Takeaway 4: When trying to scale best practices, effective teaching and leadership will not reliably emerge on their own. Definitions of what effective practices should look like and ongoing support in the form of specific protocols and monitoring are necessary.
differences in students learning experiences. For students in a Success for All school, Dr. Rowan’s research found that over the course of their elementary career they would accumulate 138 more days of skills-based reading instruction than students in schools not implementing the targeted intervention. Similarly, students enrolled in America’s Choice schools over the same period would accumulate 117 more days of literature-based reading instruction.*

Results around student achievement were also significant. Not surprisingly given what is known about the phonemic and comprehension components of literacy, students in the scripted Success for All program showed gains, although only in the lower grades. By contrast America’s Choice schools, which are marked by a skill-building intervention strategy, showed gains that were even higher than Success for All schools (three to four months of additional growth per year in comparison to the control group), but these gains were limited to the upper grades.

This study has compelling implications for states efforts in scaling effective human capital practices for several reasons. First, it shows that instructional change is very possible. Success for All and America’s Choice schools undeniably created different learning experiences for students affected by their targeted interventions. They provide strong arguments for two tactics that are often met with resistance in education: external partnership and proceduralization. Second, it underscores the need for clarity. Building on the need to focus on a specific, proven design articulated by the other two panelists, Dr. Rowan’s remarks provide this guidance:

- Spell out needed changes in curriculum and teaching. For example, policymakers should not leave to chance what happens in small groups at the local level (as happened with the Accelerated Schools Program). We need to specify what will be done during small groups, Dr. Rowan said, not merely that small groups will be organized.
- Closely monitor the implementation of changes. From the top to the bottom of the school structure, program leaders need to know if the specifics of the intervention are being carried out faithfully to the model. Much like Dr. Bodilly’s caution about leaders stopping after saying, “we’ve adopted content standards and tests and now we are going to hold teachers accountable,” leaders cannot walk away once the implementation phase begins. Autonomy proved not to be beneficial to student learning if it was not tied to very clear targets.

V. How Can Policymakers Move Forward? Areas to Consider in Identifying, Scaling, and Continuously Improving Human Capacity to Improve Student Learning

This section summarizes the lessons learned from the forum’s presenters and offers accompanying critical questions for policymakers to consider as they work to expand the effectiveness of teacher and leadership practices statewide.

1. Choose good policies. Scaling as a process unto itself is not necessarily beneficial. State policymakers have to look at the evidence base around particular interventions AND ensure that implementation is faithful to the model even when it is adapted to local contexts. Moreover, in order to ensure ongoing improvement, there must be a commitment to continuously examine the evidence on the impacts of policies on student learning.

   Does your state’s system:

   - Provide actionable information to improve performance?

   - Have mechanisms to hold pre-service and other training programs accountable for quality and impact?

2. Get rid of what doesn’t work. Time, money, and people are the resources needed for expanding successful efforts. Particularly in times of financial strain, when state leaders must

* Literature-based reading instruction, as defined by Dr. Rowan, emphasizes teaching writing as you teach reading so that students can write about what they’ve read as a means to learn to comprehend text.
do as much as possible with limited resources, it is important to acknowledge which efforts are not succeeding, so budgets and energy can be redirected to what has been shown to bring results at the level of student achievement.

*Does your state’s system:*  
- Work alongside districts in both an auditing and supportive role to evaluate how to reduce burdens and refocus investments?

- Align human capital management systems with overall school improvement? (i.e., are evaluations and professional development investments tied to individual student results in a way that allows for a check on whether funds invested for wide-scale improvement of the actions of teachers and leaders actually promoted student learning?)

3. **Consider conditions.** To spread and sustain effective practices, state leaders have to ensure that the vision for instructional improvement is carried out all the way to the ground. States must work with district and school leaders to establish trust and openness and pursue a collective learning improvement agenda. Practices in human resource management, principal autonomy, and timely access to data can either enable or inhibit cohesion—it’s up to states to make a concerted effort to establish the culture and conditions needed to scale a practice as intended.

*Does your state’s system:*  
- Collect data on teacher and principal working conditions?

- Include opportunities for role differentiation (e.g., teacher leader endorsements, tiered licensure)?

4. **Coordinate policies horizontally and vertically.** Policies scaled statewide will be effective to the extent that other policies and practices reinforce their priorities and generate synergy around common definitions. There must be shared agreement on the importance of human capital investments in ongoing practices among state stakeholders. More important, and perhaps more difficult to accomplish than spreading practices and beliefs across various levels of the system, there must be common understandings as to what effective practice is and is not.

*Does your state’s system:*  
- Differentiate between good and poor performance in a consistent way?

- Make explicit connections between teacher and leadership expectations?

- Create coherence between processes for the recruitment and selection of educators and expectations for their performance in the field?

- Strategically integrate policies across the state level and between the district, state, and school to spread an overarching agenda to improve student learning?

5. **Collaborate with districts for successful alignment.** As seen in the preceding lessons, successfully scaling teacher and leader practices depends on coordinating and implementing policies at all layers of the system. These human capital policies must be systematically linked from recruitment and selection to training and licensure and finally to evaluation and ongoing professional development, and then have a feedback loop to the initial entry point. But coordination of policies cannot be achieved in isolation. In order to successfully develop this kind of vertical and horizontal alignment, different levels of the system must not only have shared understandings, but also have a shared stake in the outcomes.

*Does your state’s system:*  
- Have an incentive for school districts to engage in this hard strategic planning work (e.g., lack of satisfaction with current levels of remediation)?

- Both prod and help districts build capacity to improve teacher and leader practices?

- Support districts as collaborators with universities to co-design and co-deliver programs to ensure expectations are consistent?
Appendix

Strategies and Actions for Building Cohesive Leadership Systems

The findings from the RAND Corporation’s recent study, Improving School Leadership: The Promise of Cohesive Leadership Systems, emphasize the need for state-district alignment of practices. The study, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, pinpoints eight strategies most important to building cohesion. Here, each strategy is coupled with a state example of how it’s been done from the state panel presentation in the afternoon of the Forum.

1. Identifying strong individuals with political and social capital to lead the work. These leaders have more than charisma, they know how to create systems and motivate change.

- This harkens back to the original premise that today’s schools need different leaders than the ones most state systems were set up to prepare. To ramp up the quality of its leaders, Springfield, Massachusetts developed a rigorous, multi-step process for the tapping and selection of leaders (a major shift from the self-selection usually used to enter this role). The new process employs a detailed application scored using a comprehensive, instructionally based leadership dimension rubric; uses a research-based principal insight tool created by Gallup; not only requires recommendations for each candidate, but also verifies the content submitted; and has a panel of district leaders review each candidate (and invests in training these scorers to calibrate appropriately). The district’s first cadre graduated in 2004, and now 60 of the district’s leaders in the system have been through this specific training program tailored to district needs.

2. Building trust between states and districts. This is hard work and requires parties to confront sometimes bitter relations and work toward establishing collaboration in efforts to resolve longstanding problems of instructional practice.

- The shared incentive for this work helped break down walls between the state and the district in Louisiana. Districts were pressuring the state because they were being held accountable for the quality of their schools, yet they felt like they weren’t getting the quality of teachers and leaders from universities (at the time, the only source because alternative providers had not been licensed). This led to the formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Teacher Quality, which included representatives from the governor, higher education, and K-12, charged with rethinking the coordinated system of policies to recruit, prepare, and retain effective teachers and principals.

3. Creating formal and informal networks. States created and funded taskforces, commissions, steering committees, etc. to bring together people who do not routinely communicate in order to build agreement on the system and the policy elements needed to improve school leadership.

- Before 2000, Louisiana’s governor, the K-12 Board, the higher education board, and the department of education all had different visions for teachers and leaders and different goals for improving student learning. This made matters difficult for higher education, which was stuck in the middle trying to meet the goals of various entities that were often in conflict with one another. The Blue Ribbon Commission described above significantly changed that, and though their original charge expired, the group is still at work today.

This shared understanding was particularly important in the program redesign process and caused the state to put a premium on collaboration. The state created expectations that were standards driven rather than course
driven, but realized it was not enough just to tell universities and districts to look at the standards if they wanted to achieve cohesion. Site-based and authentic experiences for leader trainees needed to be embedded in genuine ways throughout preparation. So, the state enforced this distinction and programs that lacked depth in collaboration were not approved.

4. Fostering communication. In order to spread the value of Strategy 3 across multiple actors and organizations, states ensured there were multiple means (e.g., list serves, websites, workshops) for distributing the common language, raising awareness, and reaching agreement on how to improve school leadership across multiple actors and organizations.

- Louisiana noted that it still has work to do on this strategy, specifically with regard to what Dr. Bodilly called “marketing the product.” While districts actually help tap who should enter and complete the redesigned training programs in the state, district-level hiring policies that place value on years of experience in the district are actually preventing districts from hiring graduates of these new higher-quality programs.

5. Exerting pressure and influence. States combined more formal actions (like passing legislation) with less formal but equally impactful incentives (like setting due-dates) to stimulate coordinated action from stakeholders.

- In its effort to create a leadership thread that goes from the beginning of a teacher’s career all the way to the time an individual becomes a part of a district leadership team, Kentucky used this strategy to make major changes. The state placed sunset dates for its educational leadership preparation programs and its masters degrees programs because they were not meeting the needs of the state, and strictly enforced the new instructional elements that needed to be reflected in the redesigned programs. Indeed, most submissions went back to universities several times before being approved.

- In the case of the masters programs, the state officials were well aware of research findings that show earning a master’s degree doesn’t lead to improved outcomes in the classroom. Yet, rather than wipe out the requirement for teachers to earn a higher degree within their first 10 years on the job, the state saw an opportunity to move the system. The state pressured universities, who at first were resistant to change, by reminding them that the master’s requirement was overseen by the state Standards Board, not enforced by law.

Phillip Rogers, Executive Director of the Kentucky Professional Standards Board, reflected on using this strategy with universities when he said, “We’ll either get this right or it’ll be my mission to not have a master’s degree.” In the end, there were benefits to universities, which continued to earn revenue from tuition costs, as well as to the states and districts that were able to rework a failing structure to get at a real need for teachers to gain advanced skills in teacher leadership and closing achievement gaps. “My goal is that the dean of the school of education is as nervous when the state K-12 student testing results are released as the local superintendent,” Dr. Rogers added.

6. Promoting improved quality and continuous improvement. States asked for evaluations of policies to ensure the quality of what they were designing and funding.

- Louisiana redesigned its preparation programs based on standards rather than course-driven criteria for school leaders. However, rather than stopping at redesign, the state is now developing sophisticated mechanisms to monitor how effective their programs are at creating effective teachers and leaders.

*About 200 programs in Wallace-funded states have been forced to redesign their programs to align with new leadership standards and training practices or have been shut down.
Louisiana has a growth model that addresses each child, predicts growth of learning, looks at whether a child demonstrates that growth in learning, and then ties these results back to the new teacher and to the teacher preparation program that prepared the new teacher. The state then compares the value found for the teacher (in five content areas in grades 4-9) to values that would be expected for experienced teachers in the state. Adding teeth to this data is a new policy passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in March 2010 stating that any redesigned teacher preparation program that has a growth of learning score that is below or significantly below the average for new teachers moves into programmatic intervention and has to make a plan for improvement. The state continues to build this data system to incorporate data points for school leaders as well.

- Kentucky continues to examine the effectiveness of its cohesive leadership system. The state requested a study on the redesign of preparation programs and continues to anchor its efforts in what the research shows in terms of student learning and teacher and leader capacity to address the continuing gaps in achievement across the state.

7. Building capacity for the work. This includes distributing roles across multiple agencies and enabling external partners to be part of the effort to ensure that learning is continuous and based on solid evidence.

- In Massachusetts, the decision to allow Springfield to create its own training program tied specifically to district needs set in motion substantial capacity building. Not only did the state develop a rigorous, research-based recruitment and development process, but once the district began to see success, it challenged all of the local colleges and universities to get on board.

- Now the district has a true collaboration with local universities, including the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The district approves course syllabi, the district and university work together to ensure integration between course and program requirements, and both parties engage in co-developing programs and certifications as well as in co-teaching, all of which are cohesion-generating practices.

8. Connecting to other reform efforts. To increase the likelihood of sustaining improvements in leadership practice, states needed to orient leadership improvement alongside the objectives of other statewide education initiatives.

- Kentucky Senate Bill 1 passed in 2009 mandates that the “right people” (Kentucky’s Council on Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Professional Standards Board) work together to reduce college remediation rates by at least 50 percent.

- The state has used the political will around ensuring students are ready for success in work, life, and society to elevate the importance of the state’s investments in school leadership. Given that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching among school related factors influencing student achievement, the value of investing in leadership is being promoted as imperative to meeting the ambitious goal of the statewide mandate. Moreover, since all of the major players are now working together on several reform issues, it has reinforced a common vision and improved policy alignment to build the human capacity needed to reach statewide goals around improving student outcomes.
Endnotes


4. Of further significance given today’s harsh budget climate, research finds that investing in principals to improve workforce quality is far more cost-effective than changing teachers’ practices one teacher at a time. See Leithwood et al., How Leadership Influences Student Learning.


