



Voices from the States

Action Plan Tool

As part of the Reform Support Network's October 2012 convening on instructional leadership, teams from Race to the Top States were expected to use the Action Plan tool to determine specific steps to implement their priorities among the policy and practice levers explored at the meeting.

In planning steps to bolster new instructional leader effectiveness evaluations, several States sought to communicate better and more widely around changes. Their assumption appears to be that the elements of the new systems are the right ones, but could be at risk if they are misunderstood. Shared messaging among supportive stakeholders and videos that could be distributed easily were among the strategies States designed. More broadly, a few States wanted to mount communications efforts around the shifting nature of the principal's role with the growing need for instructional leadership over operational management.

Reinforcing the connection between evaluation and professional development, the other high priority lever identified, several States planned opportunities

for instructional leaders to learn more about their new evaluations. Included were plans to leverage regional assistance. States also frequently mentioned the need for professional development around college- and career-ready standards. In addition, States considered ways to offer professional development around new teacher evaluation systems, leadership institutes that are State-led and augmented through local job-embedded efforts, and technology based solutions such as virtual case studies on data analysis. Given the decentralized control over professional development, States noted the lack of consensus around the nature of high quality support for instructional leadership, even in the presence of well-considered instructional leadership competency models, and questioned if targeted support for the highest needs districts was the best option.

In defining steps to improve instructional leader preparation, States considered both the quality of applicants through higher candidate standards and of preparation programs through clearly defined expectations and public reporting of outcomes. Aligning preparation program curricula to instructional leadership competencies and requiring clinical experience were other strategies planned. States also explored ways to increase their roles in support of local educational agencies in recruitment and selection. Beyond pre-service preparation, at least one State planned to initiate a mentoring program that is locally driven but informed by State facilitation and knowledge sharing.

The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

In planning to expand career pathways, States described the need to take more expansive views of instructional leadership. They called for efforts to flesh out who non-principal instructional leaders could be and what they would do, looking specifically at instructional coaches and teacher leaders recognized through a special endorsement. Central to this broader view of leadership was the question of expanding the educators within a school who could serve formally in the teacher evaluator role.

Despite concerns about limited capacity within State education agencies, less than a third of the States addressed reaching out to new or existing partners, leveraging partners' expertise or clarifying partner roles as part of their action plans.

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