**Supporting Principals**

Educators matter. Outstanding principals, school leaders and classroom teachers raise student achievement, close attainment gaps and set up their students to succeed in college, careers and life. To advance our commitment to outstanding educators, Education First supports school systems, institutions of higher education, state leaders, funders and nonprofits to improve the quality of educators by transforming the educator pipeline and elevating the voices and roles of educators in policy and practice.

Founded in 2006, [Education First](http://www.education-first.com/) is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, experience-based solutions and results so all students – particularly low-income students and students of color – are prepared for success in college, career and life. We envision a world in which every student is prepared to succeed—a world in which income and race no longer determine the quality of education.

Education First knows principal work. Many of our staff members led schools as principals and served as part of school leadership teams. Our staff members have also served as district leaders, state education agency (SEA) leaders and non-profit leaders who have focused on developing high-quality principal pipelines.

**How Education First Supports Principals**

Education First is committed to ensuring principals have the preparation, professional development and evaluation to support high-quality teaching and instruction, raise student achievement and close attainment gaps. Education First supports different kinds of organizations in this work:

**States and Districts**

* **Policy Design and Implementation.** We have developed and implemented district- and state-level policies aimed at strengthening the principal human capital continuum.
* **Professional Development.** We have developed and/or strengthened professional development programs for principals including social and emotional skills for leaders, professional learning communities and program implementation.
* **Hiring and Selection.** We have designed district-level hiring and selection processes for principals.
* **Principal Evaluation.** We have developed competency frameworks for principals.
* **Support for Principal Supervisors.** We have worked with principal supervisors to strengthen their efforts to support and develop principals.
* **Program Design and Implementation.** We have coordinated and coached district design teams to help principals improve teacher practice and support implementation of curriculum.

**Educator Preparation Programs**

* **Program Design.** We have designed, launched and strengthened principal preparation programs.
* **District Partnerships.** We have worked with district leaders to identify and share data to improve principal preparation programs.

**Non-Profit Organizations and Philanthropy**

* **Convening Design and Facilitation.** We have facilitated discussions with SEA leaders about implementing strategies to strengthen school leadership across states.
* **Strategic Planning.** We have worked with funders to determine how to support states and school systems with improving principal quality.

**Project Summaries**

Education First’s portfolio includes a variety of services, partners and approaches to support and strengthen principals and school leadership, including the following examples:

* **New Jersey Turnaround Principal.** Education First supported the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) in designing a portfolio of leadership pipelines to provide high-quality principals for Newark and other urban districts in the state. Education First conducted a needs assessment of skills, qualifications, and rough numbers of vacancies for school leaders for the turnaround schools across the state. In addition, the firm prepared a landscape analysis to highlight promising practices in turnaround school leadership across the country and developed a turnaround leader recruitment plan**.**
* **Illinois Principal Preparation Data and Accountability System.** Education First is supporting the Illinois State Board of Education as the state develops a system of sharing outcome information with Principal Preparation Programs (PPPs), puts in place improvement and intervention policies and systems, and increases public transparency into program outcomes. Education First also manages subject matter experts and communications services to ISBE as part of the [Partnership for Preparation](https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Partnership-for-Educator-Preparation.aspx) (PEP) initiative.
* **Delaware Department of Education Principal Preparation Programs.** Education First worked with the Delaware Department of Education to revise their criteria for approving and renewing principal preparation programs in the state. First, we researched six states that had recently revised their criteria to determine how they were able to do with an eye toward the types of data indicators they include in their approval and renewal processes. We then identified gaps in Delaware’s current approval and renewal criteria and offered recommendations for how the state could successfully implement revisions.
* **University of Tennessee.** Since 2017, Education First worked closely with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville to explore the root causes of principal effectiveness in rural East Tennessee and design programs to increase the quality of instructional leadership in the region. CEL launched Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education (AsPIRE), an innovative research and design effort to enhance rural school principal leadership in the Volunteer State. Between January 2018 and June 2019, CEL will pilot three new programs -and develop a curriculum for a rural school leader residency program.
* **Syracuse City School District Turnaround Schools Leaders Program.** From 2013–18, Education First worked closely with district leaders to design and implement an innovative Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP). The program is designed to increase the number of school leaders in SCSD with the capacity to lead successful turnarounds; provide incentives to encourage the most effective principals and teachers to take on leadership roles in the district’s lowest-performing schools; expand the reach of highly effective teachers to more students in turnaround schools through Opportunity Culture models; and ultimately increase achievement in low-performing schools.
* **Wallace Foundation.** Education First supports the Wallace Foundation’s ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC), a national initiative in partnership with the New York City Leadership Academy to assist states and districts in using ESSA funding to build the capacity of education leaders to implement supports and interventions to turn around schools most in need of improvement. State-based teams comprise of state departments of education, districts and community organizations prioritizing this issue to create models for success and to capture and share lessons learned.
* **Twin Cities Funders Collaborative.** Education First is supported set of funders in St. Paul and Minneapolis who identified school leadership as a key opportunity to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable students in the Twin Cities and across Minnesota. We prepared a landscape scan analysis that included information on principal quality across district, charter and independent sectors in the Twin Cities as well as an analysis of national best practices and state-level opportunities to impact principal quality. We also designed and facilitated a set of convenings to create learning opportunities and knowledge-sharing for the funders and to help them identify potential joint grantmaking opportunities.

***To learn more about Education First’s work supporting principals, please contact Rashidah Lopez Morgan*** [***rmorgan@education-first.com***](mailto:rmorgan@education-first.com)***.***