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Illinois School Leader Pipeline Participants Grateful and Ready to Lead

Springfield, IL – The Illinois Principals Association (IPA) is pleased to announce the third cohort of the Illinois School Leader Pipeline Program (ISLPP). This program aims to identify, develop, support, and sustain diverse aspiring school leaders in preparation for leadership roles. Managed by IPA and the Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration (ICPEA), ISLPP is supported by a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Participants receive tuition support, mentorship from experienced leaders, and financial assistance for professional development. Participants also receive IPA membership, connecting them to Illinois's largest network of school leaders.

“The Principal Recruitment Program has been instrumental in preparing me for school leadership by providing targeted learning, mentorship, and support aligned with real-world challenges. Additionally, the Illinois School Leader Pipeline Program has been life-changing for me, as it removed the financial barriers that would have made pursuing this program nearly impossible. Because of this support, I have been able to fully engage in my coursework and leadership development, preparing me to serve as a future school administrator. Continued investment ensures that aspiring leaders like me are ready to step into administrative roles and serve our school communities effectively.”

- Stavros Kariofilis, Greek Language Arts & History teacher, Koraes Elementary School

ISLPP partnered with principal preparation programs known for producing high-quality school leaders to target eligible candidates to build a diverse and skilled pool of future principals. University partners include: Aurora University, Chicago State University, Concordia University, DePaul University, Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University, Illinois State University, Lewis University, Loyola University-Chicago, McKendree University, National Louis University, New Leaders, North Central College, North Park University-Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Rockford University, Roosevelt University, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Illinois at Springfield, University of St. Francis, and Western Illinois University.

ISLPP participants have credited the program to support the completion of leadership programs, citing increased confidence, financial assistance, and invaluable mentorship experiences.

Leaders emphasized the importance of representation and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve diverse student populations.

Additionally, participants shared:

“Thank you for all your support and encouragement during these last couple of years. I appreciate the quick responses and the willingness to always support me. In addition to that, I appreciate all of you for always looking for new ways to support us, our growth, and our professional development.”

“I have loved being a part of this program because it not only removed the financial barrier of earning my principal endorsement but also provided me with incredible support from my mentor throughout the process. This program helps empower new leaders all over the state, and the impact is incredible!”

“Great opportunity. This program is amazing and highly recommended.”

“I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be a part of Cohort 2. This opportunity is the one that made it possible to obtain my administrator license. All the support I received was exceptional. I cannot be more grateful!”

A total of 81 participants from the second cohort successfully graduated by August 2025. The remaining 18% are expected to complete their programs by the end of 2025, Summer 2026, Spring 2027, or Spring 2028. Many of these individuals are currently pursuing doctoral degrees.

Among those who responded to the June 2025 exit survey, 34% reported transitioning into roles with administrative responsibilities. These positions include Assistant Principal, Dean, Athletic Director, Coordinator, Director, IB Coordinator, MTSS Lead, and Lead Teacher.

Janice Schwarze, IPA Professional Learning Associate and Coordinator of the School Leader Pipeline Program, shared: “It’s been inspiring to watch our School Leader Pipeline participants immerse themselves in the program - attending optional professional learning sessions at the end of their school day, leaning into mentorship, taking advantage of their membership in IPA, and excelling in their coursework. Because of that dedication, I have no doubt they’ll enter their first administrative positions ready to make an immediate and lasting impact.”

Graduates of the School Leader Pipeline Program are now exploring opportunities in school leadership roles. To learn more about past ISLPP participants and the types of positions they’re pursuing, visit https://www.ilprincipals.org/recruitment_candidates/.

The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization serving educational leaders throughout Illinois whose mission is to develop, support, and advocate for innovative educational leaders. For more information about the IPA, please visit www.ilprincipals.org.

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