

ILLINOIS PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

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**Diversity & Equity Committee  
Progress Report**

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[ilprincipals.org](http://ilprincipals.org)





To be the type of leader our organizations need, **we need to acknowledge that there are systemic disparities where students, staff, and even some leaders continue to be marginalized.** We must **continually question the structures and practices** that exist in our schools. As the leaders of our organizations, we need to **make a commitment to address any disparities or injustices** in our organizations. We have been called to take charge and **create the changes necessary** so in 10, 20, or 30 years, we are not where we are today.



— **Sonia Ruiz, Chairperson**  
IPA Diversity and Equity Committee



A quote that resonates with me is by Nellie Borrero where she stated that “**Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make everyday.** As leaders, we have to put out the message that we **embrace, and not just tolerate, diversity.**” This resonated with me because it demonstrates that we have to take active actions and not a passive mindset. The work of IPA in the area of diversity and equity is just that. An **active approach to significantly lead in this area** by doing the work for others to follow. I’m proud to be a part of that.



— **Raul Gaston**  
IPA Past-President  
NASSP Coordinator



# HISTORY, goals and vision

The IPA values diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools and in our Association. To this end, the IPA Board of Directors created the statewide Diversity & Equity Chair position in October 2018, later codifying the position in the IPA Constitution in the Fall of 2019. Denise Michelle Gamble, retired Chicago Public Schools principal, was seated as the IPA Board's first Diversity & Equity Chair in January 2019 and immediately began encouraging the IPA's 21 Regions to seat their own Diversity and Equity Chairs. Region Diversity & Equity Chairs began meeting as the IPA's Diversity and Equity Committee in 2020 with the expressed purposes of:

- Ensuring the IPA's leadership and membership were reflective of the profession.
- Providing critical input into the development of the IPA's professional learning program, Model Student Handbook procedures, and legislative positions.
- Supporting the IPA Region's with their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.



# OUTCOMES and strategies

## Duties of Diversity and Equity Chairs

The IPA Region Diversity & Equity Chair is a volunteer position providing an educational leader the professional opportunity to serve fellow educational leaders and IPA Members in a specific location of the State of Illinois. During their term of service, Region Diversity & Equity Chairs advocate for and encourage diversity and equity among fellow educational leaders. Duties Include:

1. Attend all Region Board Meetings.
2. Attend all State Diversity & Equity Committee Meetings. Report association diversity and equity goals and initiatives to the Region Board.
3. Coordinate diversity and equity initiatives/events in their Region.
4. Within their Region, continue to encourage involvement and solicit support for their Region Board and the IPA by extending invitations to Black, Latinx, Asian, and other marginalized communities to meetings and opportunities to lead initiatives.
5. Lead efforts in their Region to grow the educator pipeline, especially among Black, Latinx, Asian, and other marginalized communities.
6. Provide input into the development of the IPA's professional learning program to ensure all members' needs are being met.
7. Provide input into the development of the IPA's legislative positions to ensure the Association views all policy issues through an equity lens.
8. Ensure a smooth transition of leadership when their term as Diversity & Equity Chair ends.

## Resources

- The IPA Diversity and Equity Committee has curated numerous resources for members that can be found on the IPA website.

## Professional Development and Region Events

In addition to providing ongoing resources for personal and professional development, the IPA Diversity Committee has worked to encourage regions and committee members to create programming within regions to examine issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Professional development and regional event information follows.

## Alignment with IPA Legislative and Membership Committees

The IPA Diversity and Equity Committee seeks to work closely with IPA Legislative and Membership Committees to ensure work in the committees is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- The Diversity & Equity Committee will help review and provide guidance for positions on pending legislation.
- The Diversity & Equity Committee will work to ensure a welcoming environment for school leaders of diverse backgrounds to become involved in the association and seek out leadership opportunities.

# DIVERSITY & EQUITY-FOCUSED professional development

Over the last several years, IPA has focused much of its professional development offerings on promoting diversity and equity. Following are Administrator Academies, Micro-Credentials, Webinars, and Ed Leaders Network (ELN) Courses that address aspects of working with diverse learners, addressing implicit biases, family engagement, exposing students to diverse literature, relationship-building, and more.

In addition, IPA has included a monthly equity challenge in the School Leader Calendar which serves as a resource for administrators to remember important dates and continue their professional and personal growth through guided questions and prompts throughout the year. Challenges include reviewing data on diverse cultures that exist within the learning organization (students and staff), asking staff to help set one equity goal, exploring personal biases, and reviewing academic, attendance, discipline, and other relevant student data with a focus on any disparities based on race, socio-economic status, or other factors.

## Administrator Academies

- Tackling Chronic Absenteeism: Leveraging Data and Implementing Proven Strategies
- Be the Thermostat, Not the Thermometer: Leadership, Belonging, and Results
- Building Bridges: Engaging Students Through the Power of Relationships
- Caring Connections: A Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellness
- Classroom Management Strategies: Supporting Restorative Practices (On-Demand)
- Culturally Responsive School Leadership: Moving from Theory to Practice
- Early Childhood Inclusion: Supporting Children's Special Needs in High Quality Early Learning Environments
- ECE: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood Education
- Equity & Racial Literacy for School Leaders & Staff to Maximize Student Learning
- Equity (On-Demand)
- Family Engagement & Student Attendance: Meaningful, Ongoing Involvement in School
- Finding, Growing, and Sustaining Leaders (and Teachers) of Color
- Five Key Practices for Every Teacher that Works with English Learners
- From Words to Action: Your Response to Racism in Schools
- High School MTSS: A Path to Equity in Action
- Humanity & Leadership
- Igniting School Leadership: Navigating Individual, School, Community, and Political Contexts
- Journey to Anti-Racist Education (On-Demand)
- Leading Equity Work in a Majority White School
- Leading Restorative Practices at Your School
- Leading with Justice for All: Are You Prepared? LGBTQ Sensitivity, Bias, and Response
- Our Students Matter: Ensuring Your Equity Plan is Set for Success
- Programming the Future: Leading Equitable Computer Science Education for English Learners
- The Foundation of MTSS in Early Learning Environments
- Three Levels of Support for ELL: Classroom, School, District
- Title IX: Responding to Discrimination on the Basis of Sex in K-12 School Systems
- Unsupervised and Unstoppable: What All Leaders Can Learn from Women in Leadership
- Women in Leadership: Learning, Leading, Living!

## Micro-Credentials

### *Equity Micro-Credential Stack – Culture*

- Leading an Equitable Learning Culture
- Exemplifying Equitable Behavior
- Constructing and Growing Equity

### *Global Mindedness Micro-Credential Stack – Culture*

- Embedding a Global-Minded Culture
- Exemplifying a Global-Minded Culture

## Ed Leaders Network Webinars/Courses

- Amplifying Equitable Behavior
- Anti-Bias Education
- Autism Professional Learning and Universal Supports Project (A+)
- Bias and Microaggressions in the Classroom
- Black Girl Blues
- Celebrating and Honoring Students of All Backgrounds in Difficult Times
- Creating an Inclusive and Diverse Space with Classroom Media Content
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms
- Cultivating an E-Team with Equity at the Center
- Curriculum Violence
- Developing and Cultivating an E Team with Equity at the Center
- Empathy, Equity, and Agency in K-12
- Exemplifying Equitable Behavior•
- From Words to Action: Your Response to Racism in Schools
- Inclusion 101 and the Ability Inclusive Mindset
- Intentional Equity Centered Leadership Planning
- Introduction to Cultural Competency
- Journey Toward Anti-Racist Education
- Modernizing Your ESL, Bilingual, Dual Program Design
- Navigating Difficult Conversations About Race, Implicit Bias, and Micro-aggressions
- Racism Free Schools (coming soon)
- Reaching Diverse Learners in the Math Classroom
- Restorative Justice in Schools
- Sustaining an Equitable Learning Culture
- The Emergence of Equity, Race & Cultural Diversity Initiatives Positions in District Level
- The Inclusion Solution
- What is CRT?



More than 23 percent of our Administrator Academy presenters are leaders from underrepresented groups.

# REGIONAL efforts

Over the past several years, regional efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion have focused on fostering inclusive environments, encouraging open discussions, and promoting systemic change across various educational settings. Initiatives included regular discussions on equity at regional meetings, listening circles, book studies on relevant DEI topics, and presentations from experts and school leaders. Discussions have emphasized strategies for building inclusive school cultures, addressing racial biases, and supporting diverse voices. Collaborative events, including panel discussions and partnerships with external organizations, have also helped drive meaningful DEI conversations and actions. These efforts laid a strong foundation for ongoing regional DEI initiatives aimed at fostering equity and belonging in schools.

Recent regional highlights are included below.

## DuPage Region

- The DuPage Regional Office of Education hosts many administrator academies and teacher professional development around equity topics, including: Real Colors Workshop; Introduction to SLOP; Implicit Bias Workshop; Harmonic Multilingual Program Design; Culturally Responsive School Leadership; Culture Counts: Constructive Leadership that Promotes Student Success
- The Glenbard Parent Series offers learning opportunities for parents and staff around many topics, including equity. This is open to all families in DuPage and beyond.
- The DuPage Regional Office of Education hosts the Excellence in Equity Network, which builds capacity on equity with local practitioners and scholars, including school leaders from across the county.

## KasKaskia Region

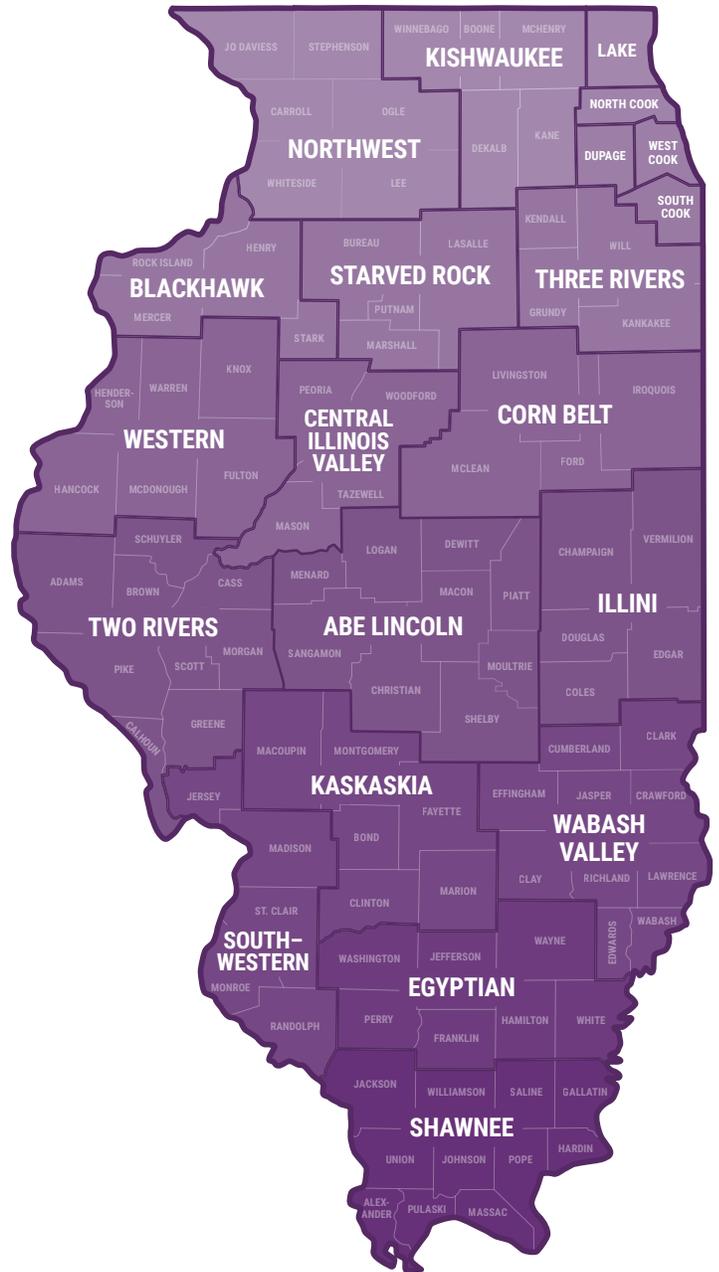
- Collaborated with and promoted the summer SEL summit which spans across the area 5 ROEs and includes PD on equity.
- Organized a Community Inclusion Team for birth-5, with Bunker Hill CUSD8 as the facilitator.
- Presented at the Summer Inclusion Institute hosted by StarNET.

## Kishwaukee Region

- Conducted a region-wide survey requesting ideas for DEI topics to discuss and learn more about.
- Equipped leaders with knowledge and confidence to engage in DEI-related conversations with their staff.
- Invited experts to educate the region on identified topics.

## Lake Region

- Efforts centered on integrating equity-driven practices into leadership through targeted professional



development sessions such as – Cultivating Inclusivity Navigating Equity Chats for Professional Growth and Team Success; Elevating Education: A Roadmap for Equity Leadership in Schools; and Diverse Perspectives and Shared Insights: Hosting Equity Book Studies for Professional Growth. These sessions provided leaders with tools to enhance inclusivity in their schools, offering a space for reflection and assessment of current practices. Leaders were able to ask questions, seek guidance, and explore strategies to address equity challenges more effectively.

### **Northwest Region**

#### *Oregon Community Unit School District 220*

- Provided classroom lessons focused on equity and diversity for grades PK-8.
- Engaged a recent equity consultant for two years of staff professional development programming (Educational Equity Consultants).
- Facilitated IEA staff professional development sessions on issues of equity.
- Conducted book studies for high school teachers, as well as an elementary-level book study.
- Organized a poverty simulation through local service providers.

#### *East Dubuque Unit District 119*

- Implemented a new classroom initiative that supports students with credit recovery, social skills, emotional stability, and inclusion. This initiative is referred to as the W.I.N. (Whatever I Need) class.

#### *Freeport SD 145*

- Student and Family Engagement Department (SAFE) meets monthly to discuss and evaluate policies and practices that may impede the educational environment of students due to barriers created by district and school policies. The committee examines biases and stereotypes related to gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, language, and race. It includes teachers, school administrators, support staff, board members, district administrators, and community members.
- Provides voluntary Restorative Practices training to all staff on designated Saturdays for six hours. This training is facilitated by a trainer from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP).
- Student and Family Engagement Department (SAFE) collaborates with the Curriculum & Instruction and Language & Culture Departments to support the work of AVID using Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices.

### **Southwestern Region**

- DEI Roundtables: Facilitated discussions on various DEI topics with multiple viewpoints and resources shared among several districts.
- Annual DEI Summit: Hosted a professional day of learning with diverse speakers, including breakout sessions for more than 150 attendees.
- Cities in Harmony: A community event sponsored by 11 school districts in collaboration, serving more than 500 community members.
- Belonging Begins Initiative: Engaged students, families, and community members to spread a message of belonging, starting at schools. The initiative expanded with t-shirt drives involving more districts.
- DEI Strategic Planning: School districts are embedding equity goals and measures into their strategic plans.

### **Three Rivers Region**

- Hosted a webinar titled “Legal Updates,” led by Brian Schwartz, Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel for the Illinois Principals Association. This session provided timely insights on immigration and other legal developments impacting students, schools, and communities. This important conversation reinforced our commitment to equity-centered leadership and supporting all students, staff, and families.
- Collaborated with Chamber of Commerce and city officials to increase engagement in the Belonging Initiative.

### **Wabash Valley Region**

- Added diversity and equity topics to Region Board meeting agendas.
- Hosted a virtual session with Dr. Marcus Belin discussing diversity and working with diverse students.

### **West Cook Region**

- Evaluated support provided to schools receiving migrant students by assessing resources available from school districts; examining how staff were responding to the arrival of these new students; and exploring the impact on staff as they worked to provide meaningful instruction to these students.

# STATEWIDE efforts

## I-Grow Summit for Educational Leaders and Teachers of Color

The 4th annual I-Grow Summit for Educational Leaders and Teachers of Color was held in Bloomington and attended by 100 individuals. The event continues the specific goal of growing, retaining, and recruiting teachers and educational leaders of color. The Summit represents a partnership between the following entities: Be The Thermostat Consulting, LLC; the Illinois Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents; the Illinois Association of School Administrators; the Illinois Association of School Boards; the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators; the Illinois Coalition of Educational Equity Leaders; the Illinois Education Association; the Illinois Federation of Teachers; the Illinois Principals Association; and the Illinois State Board of Education. The event received financial support from the Illinois Principals Association; The Illinois Principals Foundation; the Illinois State Board of Education; Illinois State University, Hatch Learning, Olivet Nazarene University, and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

## WELL Summit

The 7th annual WELL Summit (Women in Education: Leading and Learning) was held in Bloomington to a sell-out crowd of 425 individuals. Supported by 18 statewide organizations, the mission of the event is to empower, connect, inspire, support, celebrate, and develop women in educational leadership. The Summit represents a partnership between the following entities: Ed-Red; the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education; the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools; the Illinois Association of School Administrators; the Illinois Association of School Boards; the Illinois Association of School Business Officials; the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators; the Illinois Digital Educators Alliance; the Center: Early Childhood; the Illinois Elementary School Association; the Illinois High School District Organization; the Illinois Music Education Association; the Illinois Principals Association; the Illinois Resource Center; the Illinois State Board of Education; the Large Unit District Association; the Legislative Education Network of DuPage; and the South Cooperative Organization for Public Education. The event received financial support from the DLA Architects, Guin Mundorf LLC; PMA; Stifel; the Illinois Principals Foundation; Denise Gamble, the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators, the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education, the Illinois Digital Educators Alliance, and Roxy & Lola.

## Principal Mentoring Grant

Through its statewide capacity to reach principals, the Illinois Principals Association provided mentoring to 142 first-year principals during the 2023-2024 school year. The following charts demonstrate the Association's ability to match mentees with mentors based on demographic and educational setting details. All specific requests by gender, race/ethnicity, or setting were honored.

### Gender Information

	Number	Percentage
Female	60	63%
Male	36	37%
Non-Binary	0	0

### Race/Ethnicity

	Number	Percentage
White	79	83%
Black or African American	10	11%
Hispanic	3	3%
Asian	1	1%
American Indian	0	0%
Pacific Islander	0	0%
Two or More Races	2	2%

### School Context

	Number	Percentage
Urban	15	16%
Suburban	49	51%
Rural	31	33%

### Grade Setting

	Number	Percentage
Elementary	45	47%
Middle School	23	24%
High School	27	29%

## Principal Recruitment Grant

The Illinois Principals Association supported principal preparation candidates through the ISBE Principal Recruitment grant during the 2024-2025 school year. The 101 candidates continuing into their second year of the program (Cohort #2) received support.

The cohort was selected through a rigorous process and committed to:

- Becoming a school leader (principal, assistant principal, dean, etc.) upon completion of their preparation program.
- Gaining acceptance into a state approved principal preparation program.
- Completing all principal preparation program requirements.
- Being mentored by an experienced Illinois school leader.

Participants received the following benefits during the grant year:

- \$7,400 of tuition support.
- 20 hours of mentoring by an experienced Illinois school leader.
- \$500 to offset professional development opportunities so the aspiring leader can engage in IPA leadership activities.
- IPA Aspiring Membership to connect the aspiring school leaders to the largest professional learning network of school leaders in the state of Illinois.

### Gender Information

	Cohort 2		State of Illinois (2023)*	
	Number	Percentage	Principals	Students
Female	76	75%	60.2%	48.6%
Male	24	24%	39.8%	51.4%
Non-Binary	1	1%	0%	.1%

\*<https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=profile&Stateid=IL>

### Race/Ethnicity

	Cohort 2		State of Illinois (2023)*	
	Number	Percentage	Principals	Students
White	45	45%	75.6%	45.9%
Black or African American	29	29%	14.8%	16.5%
Hispanic	19	19%	6.9%	27.5%
Asian	5	4%	.1%	5.5%
Native American	0	0%	.1%	.2%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	.1%	.1%
Two or More Races	3	3%	.7%	4.2%

\*<https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=profile&Stateid=IL>

### School Context

	Cohort 2	
	Number	Percentage
Urban	43	43%
Suburban	36	35%
Rural	22	22%

### Grade Setting

	Cohort 2	
	Number	Percentage
Elementary	30	30%
Middle	26	26%
High	45	44%

### University Programs

- 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 at Champaign-Urbana
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Illinois at Springfield
- University of St. Francis
- Western Illinois University

### Graduation and Placement

A total of 81 (80%) Cohort 2 participants graduated by August 31, 2025. Those who have not yet graduated are expected to do so as follows: 7 (7%) by Dec. 31, 2025; 9 (9%) by July 31, 2026; 1 (1%) by May 31, 2027; and 3 (3%) by May 31, 2028. For those individuals who are not expected to complete the program in two years, some had delayed starts in the first year, several changed university program, several are enrolled in doctoral programs, and several others had family or personal reasons to show the number of courses completed per term. Of the 91 participants responding to an employment survey in June 2025, 31 (34%) reported they were moving into a position with administrative responsibilities (AP, Dean, AD, Coordinator, Director, IB Coordinator, MTSS Lead, and Leader Teacher).

## NATIONAL efforts

### NAESP

Because it values diversity in our culture and prioritizes achieving education equity, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) formed its National Task Force on Race and Equity. The task force advises NAESP on issues related to racial equity in school communities, reveal schools' common challenges and solutions, and support a peer-to-peer network of support for school leaders. In conjunction and collaboration with NAESP staff, the task force hosts events for school leaders to share valuable best practices and produce recommendations to advance racial equity in the principal profession and in public schools.

NAESP firmly believes that principals, as a beacon of hope and inspiration for many community members, can play a central role in leading efforts to improve racial inequities. It is our sincere hope that this task force continues to elevate the dialogue around these issues and support principals in this work.

Guiding Priorities of the task force include:

- Strengthening principals as leaders of equity by enhancing skill sets such as personal reflection on race and implicit bias, listening skills, and courageous conversations.
- School assessment and action planning by curating resources for school leaders to perform equity audits, review curriculum and access, and provide schoolwide equity training.
- Equity-aligned policy and advocacy agenda through data collection and policy review.

Illinois is well represented on many NAESP committees and initiatives.

**Denise Gamble, retired principal:**

- NAESP National Task Force on Race and Equity, Zone 5
- NAESP Center for Diversity Leadership (includes Principals of Color Network, and Latino+ Network)
- NAESP Center for Women in Leadership
- NAESP LGBTQ+ Network

**Sonia Ruiz, Principal of Jane Addams Middle School in Bolingbrook & IPA Diversity & Equity Chair:**

- NAESP Latino+ Network
- National Task Force on Race and Equity
- NAESP Principals of Color Network

**NASSP**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading professional organization for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders across the United States and beyond.

Led by and geared toward school leaders, NASSP's Leadership Networks are collaborative spaces for school leaders to share similar lived experiences, passions, and interests so we can connect with each other on a personal and professional level.

**Dr. Marcus Belin, Principal of Huntley High School**, is a member of the NASSP Executive Committee and was recently elected to serve as President-Elect for this year and will serve as President of the NASSP Board of Directors in 2026. **Dr. Tron Young, Principal of Fulton Junior High School**, represented Illinois as a facilitator of the District Leaders Network. This network provides opportunities to connect with peers who are navigating the unique challenges of district leadership while maintaining a strong connection to the work of schools.