

Editor's Note

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The US education system was set up as a garden where a thousand flowers can bloom, and where many put their hands to a trowel. State education policy-makers viewing the school landscape may at first see nothing but weeds and rocks, a vista that calls for thoroughgoing redesign. But their first job is to make sure the gardeners are well equipped.

What should become clear from even a breezy reading of this edition of the *Standard*—if it wasn't already—is that there are many ways to make sure those who teach and lead our children are better prepared and better supported to do their jobs well. Perhaps as many ways as there are US states and territories.

In West Virginia, buoyed by a directive from the governor's office, the state board of education began the work of changing requirements for teacher preparation and certification. As its past president, Gayle Manchin, can attest, such planning is best started around a table big enough to fit a lot of stakeholders. Massachusetts asked all teacher preparation programs in the state to show evidence they were filling public school needs—and made clear they were willing to shut down programs that weren't.

Six school districts around the country are broadening and deepening their pools of potential principals, according to researcher Brenda Turnbull, who is leading evaluation of The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative. Those districts want to match top-notch leaders to schools where they can succeed, and they have committed to supporting them once they are placed. And Denver teacher Lori Nazareno details the sequence of events that led Denver Public Schools to commit to tapping teacher leaders in all its schools.

In the pilot schools, surveyed teachers give the program high marks.

Equipping teachers and leaders does not end with their first day of leading a class, a group of teachers, or a whole school. Evaluation can be a key tool in continuing to build up education leaders. Too often, says Rutgers University's Drew Gitomer, it's just a hammer. State policymakers should look at evaluation systems with fresh eyes so that these systems really become engines of instructional improvement.

But they will quickly get lost if they get too deep in the weeds of the innovative approaches their districts are taking, writes Drew University's Patrick McGuinn. The varied approaches blossoming there require state education agencies and state boards of education to take a hard look at what tasks they can take on—and which they can't. McGuinn goes on to offer up myriad ways state policymakers can best support those who truly can make US public schools a beautiful space. ■

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