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ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECEIVES $750,000 AMERICAN EXPRESS PRINCIPALS PATH TO LEADERSHIP GRANT

Montgomery, Ala. – American Express and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) announced today that the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is one of five recipients of the Principals Path to Leadership grant, a giving program created to expand effective principal preparation programs and share their best practices broadly to impact education reform.

The ALSDE will receive $750,000 over a three year period to support the statewide implementation of the Alabama Strong: Principals as Catalysts for School Improvement program. The other grant recipients are: Learning Forward (Oxford, Ohio); the New York City Leadership Academy (Long Island City, New York); the Arlington Independent School District (Arlington, Texas); and the North Carolina Alliance for School Leadership Development (Raleigh, North Carolina).

“As part of the ALSDE’s commitment to an integrated learning supports framework state rollout, 50 districts and approximately 300 principals are currently involved in the initiative,” said Dr. Linda Felton-Smith, director of the Office of Learning Supports. The ALSDE’s Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports addresses risk-producing conditions that can be barriers to student learning and achievement.

“This funding will expand the work being done by adding in-depth leadership development, coaching and training for 72 principals and their leadership teams as they participate in implementing the department’s integrated learning supports initiative,” Felton-Smith said. The Alabama Strong: Principals as Catalysts for School Improvement program will be piloted in the Birmingham City, Bullock County, Escambia County, Lawrence County, Perry County and Selma City School Systems.

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The Principals Path to Leadership grant program launches at a time of heightened awareness of the principal’s crucial role in school improvement. More than a decade of research from the Wallace Foundation identifies quality principal leadership as second only to the quality of instruction in school-based factors that affect student achievement.

The five programs—selected from among a targeted pool of more than 70 applicants—will receive a total of nearly $2.5 million to increase their capacity and impact over the next three years with an eye toward long-term sustainability.

“We have built several effective global programs to develop the critical leadership skills of nonprofit and social purpose leaders,” said Timothy J. McLimom, president, American Express Foundation. “We are pleased to partner with NASSP to award grants to these five exemplary organizations that have already made strides in principal leadership training. By giving more principals access to these programs, we hope to help students and schools thrive.”

“Principal leadership is an essential component of any schoolwide improvement initiative, especially so now as schools remodel their internal structures to implement college- and career-ready standards,” said NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti. “We deeply value the partnership of American Express in our shared goal of providing the best preparation possible for the next wave of principals who will advance student achievement.”

The winning programs were announced today at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Leaders of the five programs participated in a panel discussion about the importance of and need for principal leadership moderated by Education Week Assistant Managing Editor Lesli Maxwell. Today’s announcement coincides with the launch of National Principals Month.

NASSP and American Express will work with the grantees to collect and disseminate effective practices and other informative data in the hopes of reaching more leaders and having a broader impact.

For more information about the grant program and the winners, visit http://www.nassp.org/principalspath.

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