Abundant research suggests that principals and teachers are critical to student outcomes. Principals’ work as school leaders has been found to affect school improvement efforts as well as instructional quality among their staff, which in turn influence student learning and achievement (Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin, 2013; Grissom and Loeb, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). The quality of teachers’ instruction has been found to be the most important in-school factor predicting student outcomes (Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff, 2014; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004).
The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards outline eight specifications of a high-quality educational leadership preparation program. These standards cover a wide range of knowledge and skills, including the capacity to use data, as well as equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness. The eighth NELP standard specifically outlines the need for a high-quality internship that allows future school leaders to apply the knowledge and skills required in the first seven standards. (For a complete list of the NELP standards, see National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018.)

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards set a similar national benchmark for high-quality teacher preparation programs to ensure that candidates develop similar sets of knowledge and skills, including data use in assessments and personalized learning for diverse students. In addition, CAEP’s Standard 2 outlines requirement for clinical practice and mentorship (for a full list of the CAEP standards, see CAEP, undated).

Despite established national standards and abundant rhetoric around the need to develop a well-prepared teaching force, the causal evidence on
States, as the majority of public school students are now racial and ethnic minorities (Maxwell, 2014), while more than 80 percent of U.S. teachers are white (Boser, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The mismatch between the races of teachers and their students has real consequences for students, as numerous studies have found consistent benefits of racial congruence, including fewer absences and suspensions, lower dropout rates, higher academic achievement, and a higher probability of placement in gifted programming (Goldhaber and Hansen, 2010; Grissom and Redding, 2016; Joshi, Doan, and Springer, 2018). Racial match between teachers and students also leads to positive student perceptions of teachers (Egalite and Kisida, 2017) and significant long-term gains in educational attainment (Gershenson et al., 2017).

As only one in five educators in the United States is a person of color, preparation programs must support all educators’ acquisition of the skills necessary to educate diverse students. However, these programs fall short at preparing principals to lead diverse schools in a culturally responsive manner or even to conduct meaningful conversations on diversity in their schools (Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis, 2016; Young, Madsen, and Young, 2010). Similarly, although teachers are motivated to teach in a culturally responsive manner, many felt that their preservice trainings did an inadequate job of preparing them to do so (Sleeter and Owuor, 2011). A two-stage study, which conducted parallel analyses of teacher preparation programs in 2001 and in 2015, found minimal progress in terms of preparation programs’ training of teachers to support a diversifying student body (Goodwin, 2017).

Although there are numerous studies of educator preparation programs based on analyses of educators at a single site or at a few sites (e.g., Miller and Martin, 2015), minimal research exists based on the perspectives of a nationally representative sample of teachers and principals. The lone exception is the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). This survey asks teachers with five years or less of teaching experience about their sense of preparedness for teaching their subject areas while adhering to state standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The SASS results suggest some degree of optimism among novice educators’ effectiveness is limited (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Goldhaber, Liddle, and Theobald, 2013; Henry et al., 2012; Koedel et al., 2015). Numerous qualitative and survey-based studies suggest that there is substantial room for improvement among preservice training programs. Studies of university-based principal preparation programs—the most common form of preparation—find that these programs provide inadequate preparation for the challenges of school leadership (Bottoms and O’Neill, 2001; Briggs et al., 2013; Davis, 2016; Levine, 2005; Manna, 2015; Miller and Martin, 2015; Wang et al., 2018). Issues include a mismatch between program curricula and the actual job skills required, as well as lack of quality field experience and mentorship opportunities (Davis, 2016). Meanwhile, conventional preservice teacher programs have been plagued by weak pedagogy and misalignment of coursework and field experiences, leading to variations in teacher effectiveness (Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob, 2014; Zeichner, 2006).

One aspect of preparation programs that is under little debate is the critical importance of field experience for preparing prospective principals and teachers. Field experiences (also referred to as internships or clinical experiences) range from virtually full-time job placements to brief student teaching or shadowing experiences. This type of experiential learning is seen as a critical component of quality preservice programs for school leaders and teachers and is a common component of most training programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Fry, Bottoms, and O’Neill, 2005; Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob, 2014). However, many states do not prioritize this intensive clinical experience for principals; only 14 states require that candidates spend at least 300 hours accruing field-based experience (Davis, 2016). For teachers, only 27 states had a minimum requirement for clinical practice of at least ten weeks (Greenberg, Pomerance, and Walsh, 2011).

A key benefit of field experience is that it can provide preservice educators with opportunities to work with students whose educational opportunities, socioeconomic status, and racial and ethnic makeup may differ from their own (Anderson and Stillman, 2013). Bridging cultural divides between educators and students is increasingly important in the United States, as the majority of public school students are now racial and ethnic minorities (Maxwell, 2014), while more than 80 percent of U.S. teachers are white (Boser, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

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teachers concerning their preservice training programs, as a majority of respondents said that they felt “well prepared” or “very well prepared” in each of the topics mentioned: teaching the subject matter (81 percent), using a variety of instructional materials (67 percent), using computers for instruction (66 percent), assessing students (66 percent), differentiating instruction (58 percent), and using data from student assessments (54 percent). However, the SASS results do not provide insight into educators’ sense of preparedness to support the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

In this report, we examine the perspective of a nationally representative sample of principals and teachers through the RAND American Educator Panels (AEP) to assess the extent to which they felt prepared by their preservice training programs. We explore four specific research questions:

1. To what extent are educators satisfied with various aspects of their preservice training programs, and how prepared did they feel when beginning their work in schools?
2. To what extent do perceptions of preparation vary based on the amount of field experience educators had as a part of their preservice training?
3. How prepared to support an increasingly diverse student body do educators report being, and how does this perception vary based on educators’ race?
4. For principals, to what extent is their self-reported preparedness to work with nonwhite and low-income students when they started working as school leaders associated with their preservice training’s focus on this aspect of school leadership, and how does the association differ for white and nonwhite respondents?

Data and Methods

Sample and Data

Data are drawn from the spring 2018 administration of the Measurement, Learning, and Improvement (MLI) Survey to members of the AEP. The MLI Survey was developed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in consultation with staff at RAND. The survey was designed to generate nationally representative data on educator perspectives regarding various aspects of their working conditions, including perceptions of their preservice preparation, interventions to support student outcomes, social and emotional learning, and use of data systems.

The 2018 surveys were similar, but not identical, to the 2016 and 2017 iterations of the MLI instruments (see Johnston, Akinniranye, and Doss, 2018, and Johnston and Tsai, 2018, for examples of publications using data from previous administrations of the MLI survey). The specific items that we analyze in this survey were newly developed by staff at BMGF (with input from RAND researchers) and aligned to research (e.g., Orr and Barber, 2006; Perez et al., 2011) as a means to inform ongoing efforts to support the preparation of a diverse and effective educator workforce that is able to meet the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students. (See Appendixes A and B for an abridged copy of each of the 2018 survey instruments—one for principals and one for teachers, respectively.)

The AEP consists of the American School Leader Panel (ASLP) and the American Teacher Panel (ATP). At the time of this survey, the ASLP included 12,954 principals, with 3,529 completing at least 10 percent of the survey (for a response rate of 27 percent) and 3,299 completing the entire 30-minute survey (for a completion rate of 25 percent). The ATP consisted of 28,954 teachers at the time of the survey, with 15,719 completing at least 10 percent of the survey (for a response rate of 54 percent) and 15,258 completing the entire instrument (for a completion rate of 53 percent). The lower response rate for principals may be the result of a variety of factors, including limited availability for noncritical commitments (such as voluntary surveys), particularly during the end of the school year, when the MLI was administered. It is also important to note that response rates for large-scale surveys have been in decline in general, with national educator survey response rates often hovering around 39 percent (Cook, Heath, and Thompson, 2000) and response rates for large-scale surveys of principals often falling as low as 15 percent (Jacob
Weights were designed to ensure that the weighted sample does not under- or overrepresent certain types of principals or teachers. One main weight was created to ensure that the sample was nationally representative, and a series of 80 replicate weights were calculated to produce the margin of error associated with an estimate. The main weight was calculated by modeling response probabilities of principals or teachers across a wide variety of educator characteristics. This main weight was then calibrated so that the weighted sample matches the known national principal and teacher populations across these characteristics. Characteristics that factored into this process include descriptors at the individual level (e.g., gender, professional experience) and school level (e.g., school size, grade level, urbanicity, socioeconomic status).

Our analysis focused on two sets of questions in the principal and teacher surveys (see Appendixes A and B for abridged survey instruments). The first set of questions were asked of both principals and teachers and consisted of a set of statements about their preservice training programs, about which educators were asked to rate their level of agreement (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree). The second set of questions was asked just of principals and consisted of different aspects of school system management, for which they were asked “How well prepared did you feel when beginning work as a principal to support each of the following aspects of the school system?” Response options included “completely unprepared,” “mostly unprepared,” “mostly prepared,” and “completely prepared.” For the most part, we present results using the full four-category response scale and conduct statistical analysis using the same. However, at times we discuss results in terms of educators’ “agreement” or “preparation” for ease of interpretation. In these cases, we are combining responses of “somewhat” and “strongly” agree, or “somewhat” or “completely” prepared, depending on the question being discussed.

For Research Question 1, our primary estimation strategy consisted of weighted tabulations of the relevant survey responses among the full sample of principals or teachers.
For Research Question 2, we used a measure of field service duration that was asked differently across the two surveys. Principals were asked to report the approximate number of weeks they were given “to practice what you were learning about leadership in a school setting.” Teachers, however, were given a series of categorical response options that included “no practice opportunities in a classroom setting,” “less than one semester,” “approximately one semester,” “less than one full school year but more than one full semester,” and “full school year or more.” To reconcile these differences, we first collapsed the teacher options down to four intuitive categories (no field service, one semester or less, more than one semester, and one year or more) and then we relied on traditional university academic calendars to place principals into these groups using the following decision rules: zero weeks = no field

### Table 1

**Weighted Principal, Teacher, and School Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School characteristics</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Full</strong> Sample</td>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in sample</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>2,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>563,586</td>
<td>553,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3.927%</td>
<td>4.000%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14.327%</td>
<td>9.322%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>53.625%</td>
<td>61.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.438%</td>
<td>5.761%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City school</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban school</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town school</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural school</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-language learners (district-level)</td>
<td>8.881%</td>
<td>7.557%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education (district-level)</td>
<td>13.652%</td>
<td>13.833%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Educator characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Sample sizes are based on respondents who completed the full survey and also had demographic data available for their schools. Asterisks indicate significant differences among white and nonwhite principals and teachers, according to weighted chi-square tests (for categorical variables) or regressions (for continuous variables). * \( p < 0.05 \), ** \( p < 0.01 \), *** \( p < 0.001 \).
extent to which having field experience as a component of their preparation relates to perceptions of program quality and preparedness upon entering the profession. Third, we focus on educators’ perspectives on their preparation to work with low-income students and students of color, with a focus on differences between white and nonwhite educators. Fourth, we investigate the association between principals’ sense of preparedness to work with nonwhite and low-income students when they began their work as school leaders and their satisfaction with their preservice training in this particular area. We conclude with a discussion of our findings’ implications for policy and practice. It is important to note that all analyses and the corresponding results presented in this report are correlational and should not be interpreted as causal.

Results
Analysis of the AEP data revealed several key findings regarding principal and teacher perceptions of their preservice preparation experiences. First, we found that a majority of principals and teachers had a generally positive perception regarding the caliber of their preparation programs. In particular, they felt that the individuals who provided their training were effective, that they could see the connection between what they were learning in classes and what they were experiencing in schools, and that the feedback they were receiving was helping improve their leadership or instructional practice. We found lower rates of agreement regarding statements concerning training to use data and support a diverse student body. Second, we found that educators who had greater amounts of field experience during their preservice training were more likely to agree that their preparation programs were effective. Finally, we found that preparation to support black, Latino, and low-income students was among the lowest-rated areas for preservice preparation, and white educators consistently reported being less prepared than their nonwhite peers in this area. We discuss these findings in detail in the following sections, focusing on each of our four research questions in turn.

Our findings are summarized in the next section and organized around our four research questions. First, we present general patterns in principal and teacher perspectives about their preservice programs, and we also discuss the extent to which principals reported feeling prepared when they began their work in their current roles. Second, we explore the extent to which having field experience as a component of their preparation relates to perceptions of program quality and preparedness upon entering the profession.
Educator Perceptions of their Preservice Preparation

Principals and Teachers Generally Responded Positively to Questions About Preservice Programs

We begin by discussing principals’ and teachers’ agreement with a series of statements about their preparation programs. For both groups of educators, we found a strong sense of satisfaction with their preparation experiences in general, as shown in Figure 1 (for principals) and Figure 2 (for teachers). Both sets of educators overwhelmingly agreed with statements about the effectiveness of the individuals providing training, the feedback they received, and the general relevance of their coursework and learning experiences. Specifically, many felt that the individuals providing the training were effective (91 percent of principals and 90 percent of teachers either “somewhat” or “strongly” agreed), that the feedback they received helped them improve their practice (84 percent of principals and 90 percent of teachers agreed), that they left their program feeling prepared to lead a school or teach (83 percent of principals and 85 percent of teachers agreed), and that they could see the connection between what they were learning in their coursework and what they were experiencing in their practice (87 percent of principals and 82 percent of teachers). Teachers were slightly more likely to agree with statements regarding feedback and feeling prepared upon leaving their training, and principals were more likely to see the connection between coursework and the realities in practice. However, these differences were rather negligible in practical terms, with the vast majority of both samples being in agreement.

Although most educators agreed with general statements about their preparation program, they were less likely to agree with statements regarding data and supporting traditionally disadvantaged students. Specifically, 64 percent of principals and 79 percent of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed that their training programs collected and shared data and supporting traditionally disadvantaged students. Specifically, 64 percent of principals and 79 percent of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed that their training programs collected and shared data and supporting traditionally disadvantaged students.

FIGURE 1
School Leader Agreement with Statements About Their Preservice Preparation Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My training prepared me to use data to continuously improve my school</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training program collected and shared data with me about my performance</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left my training feeling prepared to lead a school</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The feedback I received helped me improve my leadership</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could see the connection between what I was learning in my coursework and what I was experiencing in my practice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who provided my leadership training (e.g., faculty, mentors) were effective</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to work with black, Latino, and low-income students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Bars may not total 100 percent because of rounding.
and asked them to rate their preparation in terms of “completely unprepared,” “mostly unprepared,” “mostly prepared,” and “completely prepared.”

As illustrated by the two shaded blue sections of the horizontal bars in Figure 3, we found that a majority of school leaders reported feeling “completely” or “mostly” prepared to support each of the listed aspects of the school system when beginning their work as principals. School leaders were most likely to feel that their preparation helped them with fostering safety, trust, and agency among students (90 percent completely or mostly prepared) and with supporting a student-centered learning climate (85 percent completely or mostly prepared) second-highest. School leaders felt least prepared to support the needs of students with high-incidence disabilities (55 percent) and provide social and emotional learning (61 percent).

A Majority of School Leaders Felt Prepared to Support Various Aspects of Their Schools When They Began Working as Principals

We also asked principals about their sense of preparation when they began their work as school leaders, touching on a range of topics related to school management. Specifically, we asked principals “how well prepared did you feel when beginning work as a principal to support each of the following aspects of the school system?” We asked about 11 distinct aspects of school management, listed in Figure 3, and asked them to rate their preparation in terms of “completely unprepared,” “mostly unprepared,” “mostly prepared,” and “completely prepared.”

Across all seven topics, principals were least likely to agree that they were prepared to work with black, Latino, and low-income students (60 percent), with teachers also showing lower levels of agreement (68 percent).

NOTE: Bars may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

data about their performance, and 68 percent of principals and 62 percent of teachers agreed that their program prepared them to use data to continuously improve their school or their teaching practice.

Across all seven topics, principals were least likely to agree that they were prepared to work with black, Latino, and low-income students (60 percent), with teachers also showing lower levels of agreement (68 percent).
Preservice Field Experience and Variation in Perceived Preparation

Our second area of inquiry focused on the extent to which field experience during preservice training was associated with educators’ perceptions of preparation. Approximately 80 percent of principals and more than 95 percent of teachers reported having some form of field experience component, with the modal amount for principals and teachers being somewhere between one week and one semester (45 percent of principals and 42 percent of teachers). Field experience that lasted one year or longer was the second-most common amount for principals (21 percent), while field experience lasting more than one semester but less than one year was the second-most common amount for teachers (24 percent).

Principals and Teachers with Greater Amounts of Field Experience Were More Likely to Have Positive Perspectives About Their Preservice Programs

We found positive and statistically significant associations between educators’ reports about the perceived caliber of their preservice program and the amount of field experience they had. In Figure 4, we present the percentage of educators who “somewhat” or
“strongly” agreed with each of seven statements about their preservice program, broken out by the amount of field experience they had. For example, when we look at the percentage of educators who agreed with the statement “I could see the connection between what I was learning in my coursework and what I was experiencing in my practice/student teaching,” we found that 67 percent of educators who had no field experience agreed with the statement, while 78 percent of those with one semester or less agreed, and 89 percent among those with a year or more of field experience agreed.

Figure 4 also shows that for three of the statements there appeared to be a leveling off or even a decline when comparing responses of educators with more than one semester with those with one year or more of field experience. This pattern may suggest that there is minimal discernable difference between more than one semester and one year or more of field experience for these items.

**Principals with Greater Amounts of Field Experience Reported Feeling More Prepared to Support Their Schools When Beginning Work**

When we shift our attention to principals’ sense of preparation when beginning their work in their current position, we find a similarly positive association with the amount of field experience they had during their preservice training. As illustrated in Figure 5, we find an almost universally positive association between survey responses regarding perceived preparation and quantity of field work. The only example

**FIGURE 4**

Principal and Teacher Agreement with Statements About Preservice Preparation, by Amount of Field Experience During Training Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>No field work</th>
<th>One semester or less</th>
<th>More than one semester</th>
<th>One year or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who provided my leadership training/ those who supported me (e.g., faculty, mentors) were effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The feedback I received helped me improve my leadership/practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left my training feeling prepared to lead a school/teach in my classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could see the connection between what I was learning in my coursework and what I was experiencing in my practice/student teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training program collected and shared data about my performance with me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to work with black, Latino, and low-income students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training prepared me to use data to continuously improve my school/my teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Chi-square tests of the difference in the distribution of educators’ agreement with statements regarding their preparation program are significant among those with varying amounts of field experience ($p < 0.001$).
that was not statistically significant was principals’ preparation to foster safety, trust, and agency among students, but this is probably because of consistently positive responses among principals with all amounts of practicum experience.

Preparation to Support a Diverse Student Body

As shown earlier in Figures 1 and 2, both principals and teachers had mixed levels of agreement with the statement “my program prepared me to work with black, Latino, and/or low-income students,” with 60 percent of principals and 68 percent of teachers indicating that they somewhat or strongly agreed. In addition, in Figure 3, we showed that principals’ reported preparation to work with black, Latino, and low-income students was among the lowest of all the topics asked of principals, with only 64 percent of school leaders reporting feeling mostly or completely prepared when they began their work in their current position. In this section, we explore this topic and variation related to educator demographics and the contexts of their work.

White Principals and Teachers Less Likely Than Nonwhite Peers to Agree That Preservice Training Prepared Them to Support Black, Latino, and Low-Income Students

As shown in Figure 6 and Appendix C, Table C.1, we found that white educators (both principals and teachers) had lower levels of agreement than nonwhite educators. As shown in Figure 6, white principals were less likely than nonwhite principals to agree that their preservice training prepared them to support black, Latino, and low-income students. This trend was also evident among white teachers, who were less likely than nonwhite teachers to agree that their preservice training prepared them to support these students.

FIGURE 5
Principals’ Reported Preparation When Beginning Work as School Leaders, by Amount of Field Experience During Training Program

NOTE: Chi-square tests of the difference in the distribution of principals’ agreement with statements regarding their preparation program are significant among those with varying amounts of field experience (* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001).
teachers) were less likely to agree that their preservice training prepared them to work with black, Latino, and low-income students. We found a gap in perceived preparation based on educator race (62 percent of white educators somewhat or strongly agreed, compared with 76 percent of nonwhite educators), with this difference being statistically significant at the \( p < 0.001 \) level when estimated using a weighted OLS regression model. This gap remained statistically significant after controlling for the educator’s role (teacher versus principal), amount of field experience, and overall years of experience on the job. We also found a positive association between the amount of field experience and a negative association with overall years of experience.10 Although the finding for field experience is generally consistent with what we reported earlier in our discussion of the second research question, the negative association with years of experience suggests that more-experienced teachers recall that their preparation programs did less to prepare them to work with nonwhite and low-income students.11


Shifting from a discussion of educators’ preservice training programs to principals’ sense of preparedness when they began working as school leaders, we found that white principals reported feeling less prepared to support black, Latino, and low-income students when they began their work (see Figure 7 and Appendix C, Table C.2). Specifically, we found that approximately 62 percent of white principals reported being “mostly” or “completely” prepared in this area, compared with 76 percent of nonwhite principals (data not shown). This difference was statistically significant when controlling for field experience and years of experience in their current role (see Column D in Appendix C, Table C.2). We also found that greater amounts of field experience had a positive association with more-favorable perceptions of preparation. Furthermore, we found that more years of job experience were associated with less favorable perceptions of preparation; this negative association endured after controlling for individual covariates.12

### FIGURE 6
Educator Agreement That Their Training Prepared Them to Support Black, Latino, and Low-Income Students

![Educator Agreement Chart]

How prepared did you feel when beginning work as a principal to support school equity goals and, in particular, the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students?

**NOTE:** Bars may not total 100 percent because of rounding. The difference in the distribution of principals’ preparedness to support black, Latino, and low-income students was significant among white and nonwhite respondents (\( p < 0.001 \)).

### Relationship Between Principals’ Preparedness to Support Nonwhite and Low-Income Students When Entering the Profession and Preservice Training in This Area

Our final set of analyses involved the integration of the two sets of survey questions that have thus far been discussed in isolation—(1) principals’ perspectives about their preservice programs and (2) school leaders’ sense of preparation when they began their work as principals. Specifically, we asked whether the amount of training to support low-income and minority students during their preservice preparation was associated with their perceived readiness to address school equity goals related to these students when actually beginning their work as school leaders.
In addition, we investigate whether this association differs for white and nonwhite school leaders.

Better Perceptions of Preservice Training to Support a Diverse Student Body Were Associated With Better Perceptions of Readiness to Address School Equity Goals When Beginning Work, Particularly for White School Leaders

As we show in Figure 7 and Column F of Appendix C, Table C.2, we found that differences in reported preparation to support school equity goals among white and nonwhite principals was most prevalent among those whose did not agree that their preparation program prepared them to support the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students (as illustrated by the divergent lines in the bottom left portion of Figure 7). Conversely, the gap in perceived preparation when starting their work is nonexistent among respondents who agreed that their program prepared them in this area; this interaction is statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

To briefly summarize the findings, principals and teachers generally felt that the individuals providing training, the feedback they received during their training, and their coursework and learning experiences were relevant and related to what they were experiencing during their practicum experiences. Lower rates of principals and teachers agreed that their preservice training prepared them to support the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students. A majority of school leaders felt prepared to support various aspects of their schools when they began their work as principals. Educators who had greater amounts of field experience during their preservice training were more likely to agree with
various statements concerning the caliber of their preparation programs. White principals and teachers were less likely than their nonwhite peers to report that their preservice training prepared them to support black, Latino, and low-income students. In addition, white school leaders were less likely than nonwhite principals to report being prepared to support black, Latino, and low-income students when they began working as a principal, and this difference was most pronounced among school leaders who did not agree that their program prepared them in this key area. In the final section, we draw some conclusions and provide implications for policy and practice.

**Conclusion**

There is abundant evidence that principal and teacher quality are important for supporting student outcomes, yet many preservice training programs are seen as lacking and in need of overhaul (Bottoms and O’Neill, 2001; Briggs et al., 2013; Davis, 2016; Levine, 2005; Manna, 2015). Because the majority of these studies are of educators in specific state or district contexts, it is important to gain a nationally representative perspective of principals and teachers on their preservice training. In particular, we should better understand educators’ sense of preparedness to support a diversifying student body, as more than 80 percent of school leaders and teachers are white—and the majority of public school students are now nonwhite.

This report provides a summary of how principals and teachers in the United States think about the preparation programs in which they were enrolled, and (for principals) how prepared they felt they were when they began working in schools. With the exception of the 2011–2012 SASS (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), we lack national-level survey data for comparison purposes. However, as in the SASS, a majority of AEP respondents felt that their preservice training did a decent job of preparing them for various aspects of their work as educators in U.S. schools.

We focused on educators’ sense of preparation to support the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students, as several researchers have found such preparation to be lacking (Khalifa et al., 2016). Lower percentages of principals and teachers agreed that their preservice training prepared them to support a diverse student body compared with other topics included in the survey. We also found considerable gaps between white and nonwhite educators regarding the extent to which their programs prepared them in this area. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the urgent need for preparation programs to address educators’ readiness to support the needs of low-income students and students of color, particularly for white educators (Goodwin, 2017; Sleeter and Owour, 2011).

White educators consistently reported lower levels of preservice training to support low-income and nonwhite students than nonwhite educators did. However, we found that this race-based difference almost disappeared among principals who felt that their preservice training program did a good job of preparing them in this aspect of school leadership. The finding suggests that well-structured preservice programs may make a difference in building white educators’ awareness of equity issues and building their skill sets to support a diversifying student body.

There are four important limitations in our study. The first is that our analysis relies exclusively on educator self-reports of their sense of preparation upon entering their profession, so educators’ ability to accurately recall their level of preparation may come into question, especially if they have worked for years. However, we controlled for educators’ experience level in all analysis of educator-level variation, and we generally found that this did not change our primary findings of differences between white and nonwhite educators. Social desirability bias might also affect self-reporting; respondents might try to cast an overly positive light on aspects of their teaching or school leadership practice.

The second limitation is our analysis of the association between perceived preparation and field experience. In our analysis, we solely focus on the reported amount of educators’ field experience. We did not solicit information about other important aspects, such as the quality of the practicum experience, the format or nature of the placement, or the amount of mentorship offered by the supervising
teacher or school leader. In addition, we are unable to account for potential selection bias into preparation programs that have more field experience; aspiring educators who feel more motivated or prepared may be more likely to enter preservice programs that provide greater amounts of field experience.

Our third limitation is that we are not able to make claims about the actual quality of the programs educators attended. We cannot presume that principals and teachers in our sample are actually effective in the areas where they say they were prepared, nor can we presume that they are ineffective in the areas in which they claim their programs prepared them poorly.

Finally, all analyses are purely correlational in this report and do not imply causal relationships.

The findings of this report can be helpful to inform the decisions of policymakers (including credentialing bodies, such as state education agencies) and administrators of principal and teacher preparation programs who are considering ways to best prepare educators to work in U.S. schools. In particular, preparation programs may benefit from a stronger focus on supporting the needs of a diverse student body, in terms of race and ethnicity, social class, and students with high-needs disabilities. These nationally representative findings comport with prior work showing the limited efficacy of preservice training regarding supports for a diversifying student body (Khalifa et al., 2016). Preparation programs should continue to anchor field experience in high-quality mentorship experiences and connect this field experience to coursework.

Moving forward, it will be important for scholars to continue to develop studies of preservice training programs that rely on objective measures of program quality and not just educator self-reports. These programs also should have a large enough geographic scale to account for variation in preparation across programs (e.g., Koedel et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2018).
Appendix A. Abridged Principal Survey Instrument

1. What kind of training did you receive to prepare you to become a principal? (Select all that apply)
   - University-based
   - District- or [charter management organization]–based
   - Third-party professional development organization
   - Other (please specify):

2. How long did you work in education before becoming a principal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At My Current School</th>
<th>At Any School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Years</td>
<td>0 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year or Less</td>
<td>1 Year or Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 Years</td>
<td>2 to 5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Than 5 Years</td>
<td>More Than 5 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an assistant principal
- □
- □
- □
- □

As a teacher
- □
- □
- □
- □

Other (please specify)
- □
- □
- □
- □

3. How well prepared did you feel when beginning work as a principal to support each of the following aspects of the school system?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>At My Current School</th>
<th>At Any School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely Unprepared</td>
<td>Mostly Unprepared</td>
<td>Mostly Prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed leadership shared across administrators and teachers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement [Mouseover definition: ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for students and/or efficacy of school systems and processes] driven by data use</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent instructional system, including relevant materials, tools, and assessments aligned to high standards</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-performing faculty supported by strong training, professional development, collaboration, and feedback</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-centered learning climate</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering safety, trust, and agency among students</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong collaboration between families, communities, employers, and your school to drive student motivation and performance</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting school equity goals and, in particular, the needs of black, Latino, and low-income students</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and emotional learning</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting needs of students with high-incidence disabilities</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting all students’ successful transition from high school to postsecondary</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. As part of your leadership preparation, were you given the opportunity to practice what you were learning about leadership in a school setting?
   - No, all of my preparation was out-of-school training with no practice in an actual school.
   - Yes, I had some practice in an actual school before becoming a sitting principal.

5. Approximately how many weeks were you given to practice what you were learning about leadership in a school setting? If less than one week, please write 1.

6. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your leadership preparation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don't Remember or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The feedback I received helped me improve my leadership.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training program collected and shared data with me about my performance.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who provided my leadership training (e.g., faculty, mentors) were effective.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could see the connection between what I was learning in my coursework and what I was experiencing in my practice.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to work with black, Latino, and low-income students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left my training feeling prepared to lead a school.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training prepared me to use data to continuously improve my school.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B. Abridged Teacher Survey Instrument

1. Did you participate in a teacher preparation program before becoming a classroom teacher?
   - No
   - Yes

2. Was your teacher preparation through an alternative certification program?
   - No
   - Yes
   - I don’t know

3. What kind of preparation did you primarily receive before becoming a classroom teacher?
   - I went through a university-run teacher preparation program.
   - I went through a nonprofit-run teacher preparation program (not a university).
   - I went through a district- or [charter management organization]–run teacher preparation program.
   - Other (please specify):

4. How much time did your teacher preparation program give you to practice teaching in a classroom setting (e.g., student teaching) prior to becoming a teacher of record?
   - No practice opportunities in a classroom setting
   - Less than one semester
   - Approximately one semester
   - Less than one full school year but more than one semester
   - Full school year or more in a classroom setting
   - I don’t know

5. How frequently did you receive feedback on the quality of your teaching practice during your teacher preparation program?
   - Almost never or never
   - Less than once a month
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily
   - I don’t know

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)
6. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your teaching preparation program (including practicum/internship).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>I Don’t Know or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to successfully implement the instructional materials I use regularly in my classroom.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The feedback I received helped me improve my practice.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program collected and shared data with me about my performance.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher educators (faculty, supervisor, mentor) who supported me were effective.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could see the connection between what I was learning in my coursework and what I was experiencing in my student teaching or internship.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to work with black, Latino, and/or low-income students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left my program feeling prepared to teach in my classroom.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to use data to continuously improve my teaching (e.g., practices, materials, plans).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me to successfully adapt my main instructional materials to address students' needs.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix C. Weighted Regression Results

**TABLE C.1**
Weighted Regression Estimates Predicting Principals' and Teachers' Agreement That Their Preservice Programs Prepared Them to Support Black, Latino, and Low-Income Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (versus nonwhite)</td>
<td>−0.311***</td>
<td>−0.283</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No field experience</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One semester or less</td>
<td>0.170*</td>
<td>0.086*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one semester</td>
<td>0.392***</td>
<td>0.195***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year or more</td>
<td>0.593***</td>
<td>0.251***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job experience</strong></td>
<td>−0.012***</td>
<td>−0.010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>0.206***</td>
<td>0.126***</td>
<td>0.284***</td>
<td>0.212***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
<td>2.943***</td>
<td>2.434***</td>
<td>2.779***</td>
<td>2.676***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:** Asterisks represent statistically significant results from weighted OLS regression models predicting educator agreement, which is a categorical variable with values between 1 (strongly disagree) and 4 (strongly agree). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

**TABLE C.2**
Weighted Regression Estimates Predicting Principals’ Preparation to Support Black, Latino, and Low-Income Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (versus nonwhite)</td>
<td>−0.297***</td>
<td>−0.285</td>
<td>−0.286</td>
<td>−0.559</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No field experience</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One semester or less</td>
<td>0.141*</td>
<td>0.120*</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one semester</td>
<td>0.3166**</td>
<td>0.152**</td>
<td>0.114*</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year or more</td>
<td>0.252***</td>
<td>0.231***</td>
<td>0.146***</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job experience (years)</strong></td>
<td>−0.015***</td>
<td>−0.011**</td>
<td>−0.008***</td>
<td>−0.009**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.433***</td>
<td>0.318***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program preparation * white</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.150*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
<td>2.975***</td>
<td>2.602***</td>
<td>2.839***</td>
<td>2.921***</td>
<td>1.711***</td>
<td>2.058***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:** Asterisks represent statistically significant results of weighted OLS regression models predicting principals' reported preparation, which is a categorical variable coded between 1 (completely unprepared) and 4 (completely prepared). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. 
Notes

1 Standard 1 requires candidates to meet the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Core Teaching Standards that outline specific skills and knowledge (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013).

2 Respondents who answered less than 10 percent of the survey were not assigned a weight and have been excluded from the analysis.

3 A preliminary analysis of nonresponse bias was conducted by gender, years of experience, and grade band. Although there were nominal differences between genders and grade bands, there was a 12-percent difference between novice teachers, as teachers with zero to six years of experience had a 57-percent completion rate, while those with 20 years or more had a 46-percent completion rate. As we explain in the Methods section, the weighting strategy is intended to account for these types of differences in response probabilities.

4 Eighty replicate weights were calculated by removing 1/80th of the sample and repeating the process used to determine main weights on the remaining set of respondents. Replicate weights were used in calculating jackknife standard errors in all estimates.

5 For the multivariate analyses conducted for Research Questions 2 and 3, we also considered including school-level predictors such as demographic composition or urbanicity. However, we opted to exclude these because of potential selection bias, as educators' sense of preparation is likely to influence their job selection process.

6 Although we are unable to directly attribute this sense of preparation when beginning their work as principals to their actual preservice programs, the consistently positive results suggest an alignment between perceived caliber of their preservice program and principals' sense of preparation. For example, the one domain that is addressed in both sets of questions relates to principals' preparation to work with black, Latino, and low-income students. We found a positive association between the first question about their preparation program and the second question regarding their preparation when beginning their work as principals (weighted correlation = 0.536). We elaborate on this topic in our discussion of our fourth research question.

7 In the survey, field experience for principals was described as “the opportunity to practice what you were learning about leadership in a school setting.” For teachers, it was described as “time to practice teaching in a classroom setting (e.g., student teaching) prior to becoming teacher of record.”

8 The means presented in Figure 4 are based on a weighted crosstab of survey response and amount of field experience, and chi-square tests of distributional differences all suggest statistically significant differences at the \( p < 0.001 \) level. To confirm the positive association that is apparent upon visual inspection of Figure 4, we also estimated weighted OLS regression models using a categorical measure of field experience as a predictor, with all regression results returning positive and statistically significant coefficients at the \( p < 0.001 \) level. The same can be said for each of the seven statements illustrated in Figure 4.

9 We present results for principals and teachers combined because we found no notable differences in the associations based on educator role. Results for specific subsamples are available upon request.

10 See Model D in Appendix C, Table C.1, which includes all three individual experience measures.

11 We also tested for interactions between educator race and the field experience and job experience variables, along with the indicator of whether the educator was a teacher or principal, with none of the results being statistically significant at the \( p < 0.05 \) level.

12 We also tested for interactions between principal race and the field experience and job experience variables, with none of the results being statistically significant at the \( p < 0.05 \) level. Full results are available upon request.

13 The sequence of questions within each matrix was randomized.

14 The sequence of questions within each matrix was randomized.
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About This Report

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For more information about the RAND American Educator Panels, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep. More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about this report should be directed to williamj@rand.org, and questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

About the Authors

William R. Johnston is an associate policy researcher at the RAND Corporation. His research explores how local, state, and national political and social contexts relate to educational opportunities and outcomes for youth.

Christopher Young is a policy analyst at the RAND Corporation and the project manager for the American Educator Panels. His research focuses on disadvantaged students’ access to educational opportunities.