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**Learning Forward With Arizona State Department of Education Wins
AMEX-NASSP Principals Path to Leadership Grant**

Grant funds three-year program for principal professional learning

Dallas, Texas -- October 6, 2015 -- American Express and the National Association of Secondary School Principals named Learning Forward, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education, one of five recipients of nearly \$2.5 million in the Principals Path to Leadership grant program, which is designed to expand effective principal preparation programs and share their best practices broadly to impact education reform.

Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward said, "Research tells us that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction as a school-based influence on student achievement. And we are privileged to partner with NASSP, our partner in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline and Principal Supervisor Initiatives, and the Arizona State Department of Education, which shares our commitment to strengthen principal professional learning for improved student learning. The \$465,000 three-year grant from American Express and NASSP will allow us to expand our Learning Leaders for Learning Schools program for 80 principals and aspiring principals in the Greater Phoenix area and, later, scale up nationally."

She explained, "Our Leadership standard of the Standards for Professional Learning stresses that leaders make learning a top priority for themselves, other educators, and students. A focus on teaching and learning means they need knowledge and skills not only in curriculum, instruction, and assessment but also in effective adult learning. Our leadership program will help principals develop this knowledge as they learn how to develop systems of learning for the adults in their schools."

Cecilia Johnson, associate superintendent for the Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders Division at the Arizona Department of Education, added, "School leaders also need to use data to make decisions and, more importantly perhaps, they need to be able to support their teachers in doing so as well. The Department has long invested in collecting and using data about the implementation of standards and instruction. The Learning Leaders program will support current and aspiring principals to model the use of data for effective instructional leadership. We have a good relationship with Learning Forward's state affiliate and we're looking forward to collaborating in this work."

The Learning Leaders for Learning Schools program will include seminars, small communities of practice, and personalized coaching. A multimedia field guide to be co-developed with participants will allow educators in other districts to scale up the practices. According to Hirsh the time is right to focus on principal professional learning.

“Refreshed Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards will come out soon, and their release will shine a light on the importance of education leadership,” she explained. “This American Express and NASSP support of principal professional learning is timely and welcome. “

The other four recipients of Principal Paths to Leadership grants are the Alabama State Department of Education, Arlington [Texas] Independent School District, New York City Leadership Academy, and North Carolina Principals & Assistant Principals’ Association.

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Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Information about membership, services, and products is available from www.learningforward.org.

The mission of the Arizona Department of Education is “to serve Arizona’s education community, ensuring every child has access to an excellent education.” The Superintendent of Public Instruction and department staff support some 60,000 teachers and more than 1 million students.