School Leadership

Background

Draft

- Principals are “second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”

“Indeed, there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst.”

-- How Leadership Influences Student Learning, Kenneth Leithwood, et al, University of Minnesota, University of Toronto, 2004

- “Teacher turnover is lower in schools led by high-quality principals.... Research further indicates that principal turnover leads to lower teacher retention and lower gains for students.”


- “Principal effectiveness is associated with greater teacher satisfaction and a lower probability that the teacher leaves the school within a year. Moreover, the positive impacts of principal effectiveness on these teacher outcomes are even greater in disadvantaged schools.”
-- Can Good Principals Keep Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools? Linking Principal Effectiveness to Teacher Satisfaction and Turnover in Hard-to-Staff Environments, Jason A. Grissom, Teachers College Record, 2011

- Schools with the most disadvantaged students tend to have less experienced and lower-rated principals. Principals in those schools tend to leave more frequently. (e.g, Blanchard et al. 2019).

- Strong teachers are more likely to stay in schools with effective principals; less effective teachers are more likely to leave (Grissom and Bartenen 2019)

A recent large study (6 school districts) on principal pipelines finds:

- After three or more years, well-trained principals outperformed comparison schools by 6.22 percentile points in reading and 2.87 percentile points in math. These results were statistically significant and meaningful.

- Statistically significant, positive effects of the principal pipeline on achievement in elementary and middle schools and some evidence of positive effects for high schools.

- Effects on achievement were strongest for schools in the lowest quartile of the achievement distribution.

- The per-student costs are small relative to the student achievement benefits.

“We found no other comprehensive district-wide initiatives with demonstrated positive effects of this magnitude on [student] achievement,” RAND researchers say of #principalpipeline results

- Some of the fastest improving urban district (i.e, Chicago - Reardon and Hinze- Pifer 2017), fastest improving states (e.g. Tennessee --TDE 2018), and districts with a history of high-achieving minority achievement (e.g., Charlotte-Mecklenburg) invest heavily in developing and supporting school leaders.

- Over 20 years, Chicago trained over 300 principals around “Next Generation” principles.

- Tennessee is developing regional partnerships between districts and universities to create pipelines of high-quality principals.

- In Charlotte- Mecklenburg, the policy of putting the strongest principals and teachers in front of the most disadvantaged children is called “strategic staffing.” At least 24 principals have been transferred from well-to-do schools to high-need schools.

- “Next Generation” Training for Urban Principals (UIC Model)
Heavy emphasis on instructional leadership.

Evaluating Instruction.

Data analysis.

Year-long, paid residency.

On-going mentoring, support networks (coaching for 2-3 years after licensing).

Ed.D at the end.

- Problems with traditional principal prep programs include: nonselective admissions, lots of adminitrivia, curricula that fail to take into account the needs of districts and diverse student bodies; weak connections between theory and practice; little exposure to practical use of research; faculty members with little or no experience as school leaders; and poorly designed internships; no support after licensure.

Sample Recommendations

✓ Create a blue ribbon commission to study the desirability and feasibility of developing principal pipelines (selection, pre-service training, in-service support) for New Jersey’s urban systems modelled after the pipelines that have proven successful elsewhere (Gates, Baird, Master and Chavez-Herreras 2019). As part of that process, sponsor a study designed to
determine how well New Jersey prepares and supports urban principals. Consult with the Wallace Foundation on the design of the study.

☑ Commission a blue-ribbon committee to study New Jersey’s procedures for licensing principals in light of the standards being established elsewhere.

☑ Increase the diversity of candidates preparing for the principalship.

☑ In selected former Abbott districts, convene meetings of retired principals and community leaders to discuss how principals can be better supported.

☑ Encourage schools of education in New Jersey to re-examine the curricula they use to train principal with an eye to better prepare them for leading schools serving urban and diverse populations.

References


Alyssa Blanchard, Youjin Chung, Jason Grissom and Brendan Bartanen, *Do All Students Have Access to Great Principals?*, Tennessee Education Research Alliance, 2019.  
[https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/TERA/files/Principal_Distribution_Brief.pdf](https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/TERA/files/Principal_Distribution_Brief.pdf)


News Reports

"Perception Vs. Reality: Chicago Students Outperform Kids In Rest Of Illinois" - WBEZ Chicago

"Good News: Chicago Public Schools Outperform Matched Schools Across Illinois" - Diane Ravitch Blog

Other Resources

The Wallace Foundation has assembled a large collection of resources on supporting school leadership at:


Prepared by: Charles Payne, Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Research

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