

WWC Quick Review of the Report “The New York City Aspiring Principals Program: A School-Level Evaluation”[†]

What is this study about?

The study examined whether schools with novice principals trained through the Aspiring Principals Program had higher student achievement than schools led by other novice principals.

The study included schools in New York City led by principals who were hired in 2004 or 2005 and had served as principal for three consecutive years. The analysis included 86 schools that were assigned a principal trained through the program and 319 schools whose principals did not participate in the program.

The study measured the effect of having a principal who participated in the Aspiring Principals Program by comparing the change in achievement of schools where a participating principal was placed to the change in achievement of comparison schools—in which a non-participating principal was placed—controlling for school characteristics.

What is the Aspiring Principals Program?

A fourteen-month, intensive principal training program run by New York City’s Leadership Academy with three components:

Summer Intensive: Teams of participants work on school-related projects that simulate challenges the principals will face

Residency: A 10-month apprenticeship with an experienced principal supplemented with bi-weekly leadership development seminars

Planning Summer: A planning period to transition to school leadership

WWC Rating

The research described in this report is not consistent with WWC evidence standards

Cautions: The schools to which principals trained through the Aspiring Principals Program were assigned were substantially lower achieving in math and English and had different racial/ethnic compositions than comparison schools before the placement of novice principals. Although the study authors control for these pre-existing differences in their analysis, other differences between the schools could influence changes in student test scores. As a result, the study’s findings cannot be attributed with confidence to the Aspiring Principals Program.

What did the study authors report?

The study reported no statistically significant differences between elementary and middle schools with Aspiring Principals Program principals and comparison schools in the change in math and English scores. High schools with Aspiring Principals Program principals had significantly lower pass rates on math and global history Regents exams than comparison schools, with no significant differences in English or biology.

However, the WWC does not consider these results to be conclusive because there is evidence that the schools were not initially equivalent. The reported differences might reflect differences in the types of schools in which principals who participated in the Aspiring Principals Program were placed rather than the principals’ influence on student achievement.

[†]Corcoran, S. P., Schwartz, A. E., & Weinstein, M. (August 2009). *The New York City Aspiring Principals Program: A school-level evaluation*. New York, NY: Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University.