

A NEW PRINCIPALSHIP

PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS:

**A NEW PRINCIPALSHIP TO DRIVE
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
AND SCHOOL TURNAROUNDS**

with key insights from The Urban Excellence Framework™

PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In increasing numbers of individual schools across the country, a new kind of principalship is taking hold and producing well-documented breakthrough results for children. This report uses findings from these schools and principals to inform a new definition of principal effectiveness. It makes recommendations for school leadership policies geared toward dramatically increasing the number of successful principals. These recommendations will contribute substantially to scalable improvements in both teacher effectiveness and the ability to turn around the nation's lowest-achieving schools.

A new analysis by the RAND Corporation finds that among the lowest-achieving schools in a large urban system, there is a 15 percentile point average gap in both math and ELA achievement between the highest and lowest gaining schoolsⁱ – this percentile is comparable to the achievement differences between effective and ineffective teachers and is two and a half times the impact of small class sizes.ⁱⁱ Since these high-gaining schools are overall twice as likely as other schools in their district to be in federal school improvement status, their substantive learning gains represent the results needed to turn these schools around and close the country's achievement gap.

Nearly 60% of a school's impact on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher effectiveness. These are the most important in-school factors driving school success, with principals accounting for 25% and teachers 33% of a school's total impact on achievement.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, even though a single teacher can have a profound impact on student learning over the course of a year, that effect generally fades quite quickly unless a student's subsequent teachers are equally effective, with half the gains being lost the following year, and nearly all of the gains being lost within two years.^{iv} In order for students to have high-quality learning gains year after year, *whole schools* must be high-functioning led by effective principals with effective teachers across the school. This is especially vital for turnaround schools, where studies find no examples of success without effective principal leadership.^v

Schools making breakthrough gains are led by principals who have carved out a radically new role for themselves, including responsibility for school-wide practices to drive both student achievement and teacher effectiveness. This report includes key insights from *The Urban Excellence Framework*,TM New Leaders for New Schools' study of the principal actions that drive breakthrough gains and school turnarounds. It highlights the crucial role a highly effective principal plays in creating consistent, quality learning experiences in classrooms across the school, managing the school's human capital to drive teacher effectiveness, and building a culture of high aspirations and academic achievement.

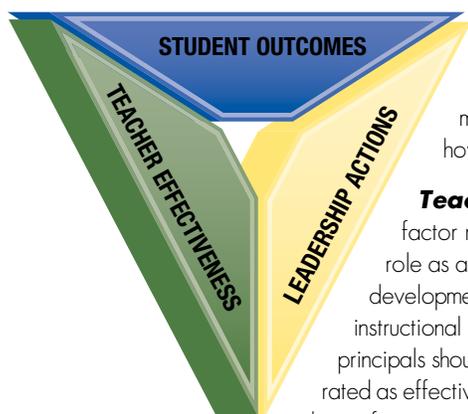
In order to bring these breakthrough gains to scale, aspiring principals will need strong selection and training programs committed to ongoing improvement as well as policy and system contexts to support this new vision of effectiveness. Analyses of student achievement outcomes of principals selected and trained by New Leaders for New Schools show impressive results, but — absent further program improvements and needed policy and system changes — they do not yet exhibit the consistency or pace of improvement required to meet our goal of preparing every child in a New Leader-led school for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

On the positive side, New Leaders K-8 principals beyond their first year are nearly twice as likely to produce breakthrough gains as other principals.^{vi} Moreover, for three years in a row, the RAND Corporation has found that students in K-8 schools where a New Leader has been principal for three or more years outpace the district in academic achievement gains over the course of their principalship by statistically significant margins.^{vii} High schools led by New Leaders for at least two years have graduation rates of 78% compared to district rates of 65% — while also outperforming these districts in increasing high school graduation rates and reducing drop-out rates.^{viii} While these results represent important learning gains for children, New Leaders for New Schools is also transparent about — and learning from — crucial areas where we must do better. For example, despite average outperformance and pockets of breakthrough success, our principals' student achievement results are characterized by variation across our cities and especially for principals in their first year. (Since aligning our program model to our new vision for principal effectiveness and the *UEF™* learnings shared in this report, we have seen initial improvements in first-year gains.)^x Furthermore, test score improvements in high schools led by New Leaders principals have not yet outpaced our partner school systems, and the overall pace of improvement in schools beyond those experiencing breakthrough gains is not yet enough to make substantial headway toward our goal academic achievement for every student in schools led by New Leaders principals.

Therefore, to ensure successful principals at scale, New Leaders for New Schools recommends a new definition of principal effectiveness — with aligned school leadership policies and systems — to supplement strong selection and training programs. We believe these policies will have a major impact on student achievement, effective teaching, and school turnarounds by supporting principals in taking the actions that *The Urban Excellence Framework™* has identified as leading to breakthrough achievement gains.

Defining Principal Effectiveness

New Leaders for New Schools recommends that states, school systems, philanthropic funders, the federal government, and others working on principal standards and strategies support the adoption of an evidence-based, three-pronged definition of principal effectiveness.



Student Outcomes. The principal's primary marker of success is the improvement of student achievement and a small number of additional student outcomes such as high school graduation, college matriculation, college readiness, or attendance rates. All schools, no matter how high or low their current achievement levels, can do measurably better.

Teacher Effectiveness. Teacher quality is the most important in-school factor relating to student achievement. Principals drive effectiveness through their role as a human capital manager — including teacher hiring, evaluation, professional development, retention, leadership development, and dismissal — and by providing instructional leadership. Ultimately, to increase student achievement school-wide, principals should be evaluated by their ability to drive increases in the number of teachers rated as effective or highly effective once a system has been put in place that differentiates the performance of teachers based on rigorous, fair definitions of teacher effectiveness.

Leadership Actions. Principals must take effective action to reach these outcomes for student achievement and teacher effectiveness. When turning around low-performing schools, principals should receive a streamlined assessment of their progress in implementing the highest priority principal actions and school-wide practices that have been shown to differentiate rapidly-improving schools.

Based on seven years of experience working with leaders who enter high-poverty, low-achieving urban public schools, New Leaders for New Schools believes that a *highly effective* principal is distinguished by making breakthrough gains in student achievement, including movement from "proficient" to "advanced" in higher performing schools, and a small number of additional student outcomes. The highly effective principal also makes accelerated progress in implementing the principal actions and school-wide practices that differentiate rapidly-improving schools.

Leadership Actions and The Urban Excellence Framework™

New Leaders for New Schools developed *The Urban Excellence Framework™ (UEF™)* to understand and define the key *leadership actions* taken by highly effective principals to drive teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Over the past two years, we have built an evidence-based framework rooted in data from over 60 site visits comparing incremental and breakthrough-gaining urban public schools in 10 cities across the country. We also incorporated a full review of the practices documented by the Effective Practice Incentive Community.* We found that certain leadership actions within the following five categories are critical to achieving transformative results: 1) ensuring rigorous, goal- and data-driven **learning and teaching**; 2) building and managing a high-quality **staff** aligned to the school's vision of success for every student; 3) developing an achievement- and belief-based **school-wide culture**; 4) instituting **operations and systems** to support learning; and 5) modeling the **personal leadership** that sets the tone for all student and adult relationships in the school. Select insights from the *UEF™* include:

Learning and Teaching. In schools making breakthrough gains, and especially in turnaround schools, highly effective principals ensure that the curricula and instruction are aligned to standards for college and career readiness. They develop teachers around a coherent set of instructional strategies. Students know they will be held to similar expectations in every classroom. Teachers know that meaningful student learning data is the foundation for all lesson planning, teacher team meetings, professional development, and a robust pyramid of academic interventions for struggling students. Several New Leaders principals who have implemented a robust and coherent framework of this type are profiled in *Driven by Data: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*, a forthcoming book by New Leader Paul Bambrick-Santoyo.**

Aligned Staff. Teacher quality is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement. Highly effective principals manage their school's human capital to drive teacher effectiveness and to make breakthrough student learning gains. These principals ensure at least weekly observations in every classroom, create individualized professional development plans, and support growth through direct feedback and job-embedded professional learning. They recruit, select, and evaluate teachers based on high standards — rewarding top performers and dismissing or counseling out teachers who cannot or will not meet expectations. They develop individual teachers' leadership capacity and — crucially, over time — build philosophically aligned leadership teams with genuine responsibility for guiding the core work of the school.

Culture. Highly effective principals build a “work hard, get smart” culture throughout the school community. They insist on students having high aspirations for themselves and on adults demonstrating personal responsibility for improved student outcomes and for supporting students in reaching their goals. Principals ensure that every aspect of the school's work reinforces the messages, “school is important,” “you can do it,” “we're here to help,” and “you and we are responsible for your success.” They implement clear, consistent codes of student and adult conduct focused on positive learning behaviors and respect for self and others. Finally, they reinforce these norms by placing them at the core of the school's instructional strategy.

Stages and Diagnosis. Low-performing schools do not turn into centers of excellence overnight; rather, school-wide practices progress through stages of improvement. Highly effective principals understand this trajectory and constantly diagnose their school's practices against it. They have a clear picture of their current state, future goals, and the path in between. Principals use this information to identify the few, focused, and highest impact actions they can take to move their schools into the next stage and achieve breakthrough outcomes for children. They recognize that key dimensions of leadership in an early turnaround situation are quite different than in a highly successful, well-functioning school.

* For more information about EPIC or to view sample case studies and multimedia content, please visit <http://www.nlms.org/uef.jsp>. Sample case studies from Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's forthcoming book can be found on the website as well, reproduced with permission of the publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Policy Recommendations: Principal Effectiveness

New Leaders for New Schools recommends that states, school systems, philanthropic funders, the federal government, and others:

- (a) Support an evidence-based creation of the three-pronged definition of principal effectiveness described above.
- (b) Align strategies, systems, and programs — including those below — to dramatically increase the percentage and number of principals who meet that definition, with a special focus on high-poverty and low-achieving schools.

States

- Revise principal standards based on these definitions of effective and highly effective principals
- Set guidelines for revised principal evaluation tools and processes that differentiate and support principal performance based on these definitions of effectiveness
- Require principal preparation programs to track their graduates' eventual effectiveness — including achievement gains and key placement and retention metrics — and provide annual plans for improvement based on this data
- Expand the pipeline of effective principals by granting certification authority to institutions other than schools of education — including non-profit organizations and school systems — with principal and school leadership preparation programs that match state standards and meet requirements for tracking and learning from data
- Study and disseminate learnings from schools and principals making breakthrough gains and use insights to periodically revise the state's definition of principal effectiveness and state standards and policies relating to school leadership
- Ensure higher percentages of effective principals by offering financial and other incentives to retain high-performers and eliminating any state legislative or regulatory barriers to removing low-performers through efficient and fair evaluations aligned to the new definitions of principal effectiveness

School System: Districts and Charter Management Organizations

- Establish rigorous principal selection criteria and processes based on these definitions of effective and highly effective principals
- Revise principal evaluations, tools, and processes based on these definitions of effective and highly effective principals, and use them to support improved principal performance and practice
- Set expectations that are aligned to this definition of principal effectiveness for the evaluation, professional development, selection and dismissal processes, and job design of school system leaders who directly manage principals
- Revise system policies to ensure autonomy of decision-making for principals, especially in their crucial role as school-level human capital managers as described in *The Urban Excellence Framework™*
- Create a leadership pipeline by identifying and developing teachers and administrators who demonstrate the potential to become effective and highly effective principals
- Ensure higher percentages of effective principals by supporting high-quality professional development for all school leaders and offering financial and other incentives to retain high-performers while removing low-performers through efficient and fair evaluations aligned to the new definitions of principal effectiveness

Philanthropic Funders

- Invest in creating evidence-based definitions of principal effectiveness and in systems that design and implement policies and practices that are aligned to those definitions
- Fund leadership development as a key element of any system-wide reform or any strategy for teacher effectiveness or turning around low-performing schools
- Invest in the study, dissemination, and use of learnings from schools and principals making breakthrough gains in student achievement to drive professional development for school leaders and policy change in school leadership
- Fund school leadership selection and training programs that get results and use data to make further improvements
- Invest in rigorous formative and summative evaluations of systemic and program efforts to improve school leadership

Policy Recommendations: Turnaround Schools

New Leaders for New Schools also advocates for policies to create the conditions for principals to turn around our nation's lowest performing schools:

States

- Develop and align policies and funding streams to encourage school systems to give substantial decision-making authority to well-selected and well-prepared turnaround principals — especially over key school-level human capital management such as hiring and dismissal, evaluation, staff professional development, and the selection of leadership team members
- Invest in systems-level approaches to ensuring effective leaders and teachers for turnaround schools by building coalitions of organizations and school systems focused on the development and deployment of effective turnaround human capital
- Provide discretionary funds for school systems implementing proven turnaround strategies such as those described below
- Study and disseminate learnings from successful turnaround schools and use insights to periodically revise state policies relating to turnaround schools and their leadership

School Systems: Districts and Charter Management Organizations

- Revise system policies to give well-selected, well-prepared turnaround principals the substantial decision-making authority needed to serve in their crucial roles as human capital managers, including authority over teacher hiring and dismissal, evaluation, development, and the selection of leadership team members
- Grant turnaround principals autonomy over operational issues relating to budgets, schedules, school support services, curriculum and instruction, and types and uses of data
- Build a human capital pipeline to ensure effective turnaround teachers and leaders by creating a multi-faceted career ladder that positions turnaround schools as the best place to work for rapid professional development and advancement opportunities
- Select turnaround principals who have demonstrated the capacity to create whole-school change
- Partner effectively with teachers unions to ensure both efficacy and fairness in the revision of system policies relating to human capital in turnaround schools
- Hire and place turnaround principals as early as possible, preferably at least several months prior to the end of the school year preceding their formal adoption of the principalship
- Require and provide funds for the staff of turnaround schools to spend more time in planning and professional development before the start of the school year
- Provide turnaround principals with the funds to compensate an expanded group of principal-selected leadership team members
- Ensure alignment of school system leaders who directly manage principals, especially with regard to the needs for urgency, student achievement focus, and dramatic school changes needed in turnarounds

Philanthropic Funders

- Invest in capacity-building efforts of turnaround schools and school systems
- Fund ongoing implementation for turnaround schools and school systems
- Invest in the study and dissemination of learnings from successful turnaround schools
- Invest in efforts to select, develop, and support effective principals and leadership teams for turnarounds

New Leaders for New Schools' initial recommendations can help build a comprehensive approach to improving principal effectiveness and creating the crucial policy contexts of autonomy, accountability, and support that will foster school transformation at scale. In this era of unprecedented investment in our nation's schools, we further urge the federal government to play an active role incenting and supporting their adoption.

ENDNOTES

- i Exploratory analyses of school-level learning gains across New York City's lowest quarter of schools based on 2006-2008 student-level achievement data. This exploratory data analysis was provided to New Leaders for New Schools as part of RAND's longitudinal evaluation of the New Leaders program. The preliminary analyses explored schools that were in the bottom quarter of the district's performance level for one and for two years, calculating school-level averages of student achievement gains for the 2008 school year. Differences reflect the top and bottom deciles of scores. The RAND Corporation's analyses of these data were independent of the formation of this report: New Leaders for New Schools assumes all responsibility for the interpretive lens used here.
- ii Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, Nye, B., Hedges, L. V., & Konstantopoulos, S. (1999). The long-term effects of small classes: A five-year follow-up of the Tennessee class size experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 21(2), 127-142; Biddle, B. J., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). Small class size and its effects. In J. H. Ballantine & J. Z. Spade (Eds.), *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- iii Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- iv Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2008). *Estimating teacher impacts on student achievement: An experimental evaluation*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- v Berends, M., Kirby, S. N., Naftel, S., & McKelvey, C. (2001). *Implementation and performance in new American schools: Three years into scale-up*. (No. MR-1145). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation; Duke, D. (2004). The turnaround principal: High stakes leadership. *Principal Magazine*, 84(1), 12-23.
- vi Based on internal analyses of publicly available K-8 proficiency data across all districts for New Leaders principals in their second year or beyond. Our analytics define "breakthrough" as gains of 20 or more points in the percentage of students who reach proficiency—or, in schools that have reached proficiency, gains of 20 or more points in the proportion of students scoring at advanced levels. This calculation takes into account our proportional representation in a district. For example, if we are 10% of a district's principals but get 20% of their breakthrough gains, we are twice as likely as others to get breakthrough gains. The calculation excludes NYC because the sheer numbers of non-New Leaders-led schools in NYC masks the New Leaders-led school impact. Still, within the city of New York, 61% of 2+ New Leaders principals in K-8 schools had breakthrough gains compared to 37% in the district.
- vii Annual internal project reports on progress of the RAND Corporation's longitudinal evaluation of the New Leaders for New Schools program.
- viii Based on internal analyses of the most recent publicly available graduation data from 2008 for New Leaders in their second year or beyond.
- ix Exploratory analysis using publicly available achievement data from schools led by first-year New Leaders principals across all our districts from 2007-2009.
- x Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (anticipated 2010). *Driven by Data: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*. Jossey-Bass. Sample case studies are reproduced with permission of the publisher at <http://www.nlms.org/uef.jsp>.



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New Leaders for New Schools is working to address the national crisis in urban public education by selecting and preparing outstanding leaders and supporting the performance of the urban public schools they lead at scale. New Leaders for New Schools has set clear goals and strategies to help schools led by New Leaders principals succeed while also supporting the success of our partner school systems and, over time, education practitioners and policymakers nationwide. Our strong focus on our mission and long-term goals is allowing New Leaders for New Schools to make a powerful contribution toward our vision that one day every student will graduate from high school ready for college, career, and citizenship.

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