REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

Educator Effectiveness, Principals
November 2018

Question:

What are characteristics or components of effective programs or strategies that promote the development of school leaders?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the development of leadership skills in school or district administrators. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on professional development for school or district administrators. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed components of programs or strategies that promote leadership development. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED533003; full text available at

https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Preparing-School-Leaders.pdf

From the abstract: "This study examines eight exemplary pre- and in-service principal development programs. The programs were chosen both because they provide evidence of strong outcomes in preparing school leaders and because, in combination, they represent a variety of approaches with respect to their designs, policy contexts, and the nature of partnerships between universities and school districts. Pre-service preparation programs were sponsored by four universities: Bank Street College, Delta State University, the University of Connecticut, and the University of San Diego working with the San Diego City Schools. In-service programs were sponsored by the Hartford (CT) School District, Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools (which included a pre-service component), Region 1 in New York City, and the San Diego City Schools. In several cases, pre- and in-service programs create a continuum of coherent learning opportunities for school leaders. To understand how the programs operate and how they are funded, the authors interviewed program faculty and administrators, participants and graduates, district personnel and other stakeholders; reviewed program documents; and observed meetings, courses, and workshops. Findings include: (1) Exemplary programs can produce leaders who engage in effective practices; (2) Exemplary pre- and in-service development programs share common features; (3) Program success is influenced by leadership, partnerships, and financial supports; and (4) State and district policies influence program designs and outcomes."

Gates, S. M., Hamilton, L. S., Martorell, P., Burkhauser, S., Heaton, P. Pierson, A.,…Gu, K. (2014). *Preparing principals to raise student achievement: Implementation and effects of the New Leaders program in ten districts.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED561152; full text available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR500/RR507/RAND_RR507.pdf

From the abstract: "New Leaders is a nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure high academic achievement for all students by developing outstanding school leaders to serve in urban schools. Its premise is that a combination of preparation and improved working conditions for principals, especially greater autonomy, would lead to improved student outcomes. Its approach involves both preparing principals and partnering with school districts and charter management organizations (CMOs) to improve the conditions in which its highly trained principals work. As part of the partnerships, New Leaders agrees to provide carefully selected and trained principals who can be placed in schools that need principals and to provide coaching and other support after those principals are placed. The districts and CMOs agree to establish working conditions that support, rather than hinder, the principals' efforts to improve student outcomes. This report describes how the New Leaders program was implemented in partner districts, and it provides evidence of the effect that New Leaders has on student achievement."

Herman, R., Gates, S. M., Arifkhanova, A., Barrett, M., Bega, A., Chavez-Herrerias, E. R.,…Wrabel, S. L. (2017). *School leadership interventions under the Every Student Succeeds*

Act: Evidence review. Updated and expanded. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED581652; full text available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1550-3.html

From the abstract: "The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents a renewed focus on school leadership and acknowledges the importance of school principals to school improvement and effective instruction (Public Law No. 114-95, 2015). The act allows states and districts to use federal funds for activities targeting the quality of school principals and other school leaders. ESSA repeatedly calls for the use of 'evidence-based' activities, strategies, and interventions (Public Law No. 114-95, 2015). The RAND Corporation conducted a synthesis of the evidence base on school leadership efforts to inform the use of school leadership activities and interventions under ESSA. This report is intended to help federal, state, and district education policymakers understand and implement efforts to improve school leadership that are consistent with ESSA. Herein, the authors first offer an overview of the ways in which school leadership may affect outcomes of interest and then describe how school leadership is addressed by ESSA funding streams and statutory provisions. The key questions for this topic are: (1) What is the evidence that school leadership matters for school improvement? and (2) What school leadership-improvement activities are supported under ESSA? The authors then describe the ESSA-defined tiers of evidence that such funding streams will require. They compare ESSA evidence tiers with evidence requirements for other federal education programs to identify ambiguities in the ESSA tiers. The key question for this section is: How are the ESSA evidence tiers defined, how does current guidance clarify these tiers, and what further guidance might improve the use of these evidence tiers for education decisionmaking? Next, they provide a brief description of their methodology in reviewing the literature and present findings on improvement activities that could reasonably be interpreted to fit within ESSA's evidence framework, given the statute and guidance. Finally, recommendations are offered to guide education policymakers, practitioners, and thought leaders on the use of research-based practices. A bibliography is included."

Jacob, R., Goddard, R., Kim, M., Miller, R., & Goddard, Y. (2015). Exploring the causal impact of the McREL Balanced Leadership Program on leadership, principal efficacy, instructional climate, educator turnover, and student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 37*(3), 314–332. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1072764; full text available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1003.6694&rep=rep1&type=pdf

From the abstract: "This study uses a randomized design to assess the impact of the Balanced Leadership program on principal leadership, instructional climate, principal efficacy, staff turnover, and student achievement in a sample of rural northern Michigan schools. Participating principals report feeling more efficacious, using more effective leadership practices, and having a better instructional climate than control group principals. However, teacher reports indicate that the instructional climate of the schools did not change. Furthermore, we find no impact of the program on student achievement. There was an impact of the program on staff turnover, with principals and teachers in treatment

schools significantly more likely to remain in the same school over the 3 years of the study than staff in control schools."

Nunnery, J. A., Ross, S. M., Chappell, S., Pribesh, S., & Hoag-Carhart, E. (2011). *The impact of the NISL Executive Development Program on school performance in Massachusetts: Cohort 2 results.* Norfolk, VA: The Center for Educational Partnerships, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED531042

From the abstract: "School leaders are increasingly being asked, whether by rhetoric or policy, to measurably improve student achievement. The resultant need to assist school leaders in their ability to improve teaching and learning for all students in their schools led to the establishment of the National Institute of School Leadership's (NISL's) Executive Development Program. The NISL program emphasizes the role of principals as strategic thinkers, instructional leaders, and creators of a just, fair, and caring culture in which all students meet high standards. The current national focus on the importance of effective, instructional leadership has, in turn, led to calls for principal evaluation to be tied directly to student achievement (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, and Leon, 2011). Within this milieu, effective and proven principal leadership development programs are crucial."

Pont, B., Nusche, D., & Moorman, H. (2008). *Improving school leadership: Volume 1: Policy and practice.* Paris, France: OECD Publications. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED504576; full text available at https://www.oecd.org/education/school/44374889.pdf

From the introduction: "As countries strive to reform education systems and improve student results, school leadership is high on education policy agendas. But in many countries, the men and women who run schools are overburdened, underpaid and near retirement. And few people are lining up for their jobs. Based on an OECD study of school leadership practices and policies around the world, and offering a unique cross country perspective, this book identifies four policy levers and a range of policy options to help governments improve school leadership now and build sustainable leadership for the future. Five chapters include: (1) School Leadership Matters; (2) (Re)Defining School Leadership Responsibilities; (3) Distributing School Leadership; (4) Developing Skills for Effective School Leadership; and (5) Making School Leadership an Attractive Profession."

Rieckhoff, B. S., & Larsen, C. (2012). The impact of a professional development network on leadership development and school improvement goals. *School-University Partnerships, 5*(1), 57–73. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ974369

From the abstract: "Principals are expected to create a vision for their schools with clearly articulated goals for sustainable change. The 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards provide a strong framework for leadership knowledge, behavior and dispositions. ISLLC Standards 1 and 2 outline the school leader's responsibility in articulating the school vision and providing a successful instructional program. Professional Development Schools (PDSs) provide a model of school reform that enables school leaders to access multiple avenues of support in their efforts to develop implement

this vision. This article considers the impact a professional development school partnership has on leadership development. The authors document the principals' perspective on the impact of the PDS partnership and how the partnership allows school leaders to focus on clear school improvement goals and targeted professional development as their leadership and school-wide sustainable changes develop over time."

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica Policy Research. (2018). *What does the recent research say about leadership coaching in K–12 settings? What are the key features and characteristics of effective coaching models? What is the evidence on various leadership coaching models?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_46.asp

Ask a REL Midwest at American Institutes for Research. (2017). *What are best practices for preparing and further supporting the development of charter school leaders? What programs or strategies are available on how to retain charter school leaders?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/askarel/2017/development-charter-school-leaders.aspx

Ask A REL Southwest at American Institutes for Research. (2018). *Effects of principal and superintendent certification or accreditation policies.* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/ask-a-rel/principal-superintendent-certification-policies.aspx

Ask A REL Southwest at American Institutes for Research. (2018). *Principal preparation.* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/ask-a-rel/principal-preparation.aspx

Additional Organizations to Consult

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research: http://www.gtlcenter.org/

From the website: "The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) is dedicated to supporting state education leaders in their efforts to grow, respect, and retain great teachers and leaders for all students. The GTL Center continues the work of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) and expands its focus to provide technical assistance and online resources designed to build systems that:

- Support the implementation of college and career standards.
- Ensure the equitable access of effective teachers and leaders.
- Recruit, retain, reward, and support effective educators.
- Develop coherent human capital management systems.
- Create safe academic environments that increase student learning through positive behavior management and appropriate discipline.

- Use data to guide professional development and improve instruction."

National Association of Secondary School Principals: https://www.nassp.org/

From the website: "The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student…NASSP provides our members with the professional research-based and peer-tested resources, and practical tools and materials they need to serve as visionary school leaders."

NASSP position statement, guiding principles, recommendations, and resources on Leadership Development for School Leaders: https://www.nassp.org/policy-advocacy-center/nassp-position-statements/leadership-development-for-school-leaders/

The Wallace Foundation: https://www.wallacefoundation.org

From the website: "Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is a philanthropy working nationally to answer important questions that, if solved, could help strengthen practices and policies within a field. Our mission is to foster improvements in learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children and the vitality of the arts for everyone…Wallace currently has initiatives in six areas: afterschool, arts education, building audiences for the arts, expanded learning, school leadership and summer learning."

The Wallace Foundation resources on school leadership:
https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- leader* AND develop* AND (school or education) AND (intervention OR program OR strategy)
- (principal OR administrator OR leader) AND "professional development"

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we

searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover information available within the last ten years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on November 13, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.