Districts Matter: Cultivating the Principals Urban Schools Need

Hosted By:

John Nori
Associate Director of Program Development, NASSP

nassp
national association of secondary school principals

The Wallace Foundation
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Today’s presenters

Glenn Pethel
Assistant Superintendent
Leadership Development
Gwinnett County Public Schools

Michelle Farmer
Director
Leadership Development
Gwinnett County Public Schools

Erin Hahn
Coordinator
Leadership Development
Gwinnett County Public Schools
The Wallace Approach (theory of change)

Understand the Context
(Engage with the external environment to identify knowledge gaps, field interest, and time lines)

Catalyze Broad Impact
(Improve practice and policy nationwide)

Generate Improvements and Insights
(Build promising new approaches and new evidence/knowledge)
Wallace’s education leadership initiative: 2000-2010

Our strategies:

– 26 states; 15 main urban districts
– Commissioned research to fill knowledge gaps and evaluate across sites
– Professional learning communities for states, districts, partners

Resulting in:

• Over 70 research reports
• 140 sustained, high quality initiatives (including 24 pre-service training programs)
• 15 new non-profit organizations
The result

• Education leadership *does* make a difference in school improvement and student achievement
  – Focusing on school leaders is cost effective
  – Five research-based practices of effective leaders

• High quality training for school leaders is essential
  – Identified 5 essential components of effective programs

• School districts are where change happens
  – Identified main functions needed by districts to support leadership
  – “District as consumer” is a promising strategy to improve programs
Leadership is key to student learning

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

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

“Six years later we are even more confident about this claim.”

-- Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning, Louis, et al, 2010
Principals are key to teaching quality

“It is the leader who both recruits and retains high quality staff. Indeed, the number one reason for teachers’ decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of administrative support – and it is the leader who must develop this organization.”

What effective principals do

- Shape a transformational vision of academic success for all students
- Create a hospitable climate
- Manage people, data and processes
- Improve instruction
  - Lead the professional learning community
- Cultivate leadership in others
  - Lead the leadership team

Source: The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, January 2012
But: A good leader is hard to find

- There is no shortage of certified principals – but there is a shortage of qualified principals
  
  — Beyond the Pipeline, 2003

- 50% of superintendents around the country report difficulty finding qualified principals. 61% of superintendents in urban areas can’t find the leaders they need
  

- There needs to be a match between the district’s needs and the leaders that the programs produce
  
  — Districts Developing Leaders, 2010
A big unanswered question

If an urban district and its principal training programs provide

• large numbers of talented, aspiring principals
• with the right “pre-service” training and
• on-the-job evaluation and supports,

...will the result be a pipeline of principals able to improve teaching quality and student achievement, especially in schools with the greatest needs?
The Principal Pipeline: 2011 - 2017

- High quality
- Aligned

- District-wide scale
- In support of district reform agenda
Members of the PPI PLC

[Logos of various organizations]
District Job: Shaping School Leadership
Districts Matter – Two Big Tasks

First
• Build a large corps of well-qualified candidates for the principalship (the pipeline)

Second
• Support school leaders on the job
Task 1: Build a Corps of Well Qualified Candidates

- What principals need to know for better instruction
  - Improve “pre-service” training
  - Identify most promising future leaders & match to schools
  - Ensure that hard-to-staff schools get top quality leaders
What principals need to know for better instruction

- A clear job description
- State standards
- ISLLC standards
Improve “pre-service” training

• Traits
• Knowledge and skills

District standards

District training program
• Aspiring Principal
• Collaborative

• MOUs
• Quality Measures
• Consumer approach

University partnerships
Identify most promising future leaders & match to schools

- Selective and systematic hiring procedures
- Assessment and screening tools
- Preferred providers
Ensure that hard-to-staff schools get top quality leaders
Districts Matter

Task 2: Support school leaders on the job

1. Develop fair, reliable performance evaluations
2. Mentor novice principals and provide PD to all principals
3. Provide usable data and training
4. Enable principals to use time for instruction
5. Plan for succession
Develop fair, reliable performance evaluations

Focus on most important behaviors and actions that improve instruction, anchored in leader standards

An emphasis on school change

Reliable and valid tools and processes

Development that addresses needs

Multiple measures of student and school performance
Mentor novice principals and provide PD to all principals

• Provide mentoring for all novice principals for at least a year

• Use assessment data to shape professional development

• Provide regular expert help to principals individually or in networks to improve performance
Provide usable data and training

Data

Information

Data systems

Training

Variety

Time

Opportunity
Enable principals to use time for instruction
Plan for succession

- Pipeline development
- Distribution of leadership
- Flexibility
- District vision
- Engagement
Conclusion

Consistent shared exercise of leadership will endure

Leadership building actions are interdependent

There are costs
Contact Information

Glenn Pethel
Assistant Superintendent-Leadership Development
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Glenn_pethel@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Michelle Farmer
Director-Leadership Development
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Michelle_farmer@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Erin Hahn
Coordinator-Leadership Development
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