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™

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EFFECTIVENESS

New Leaders *for*
New Schools

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Accompanying this report are case studies of schools making breakthrough achievement gains under a successful principal. One is included as an appendix here. More case studies and policy recommendations from New Leaders for New Schools are available at http://www.nlns.org/uef.jsp

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

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 schools[i] — 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,*™ 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.)[ix] 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.*x

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.

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* For more information about EPIC or to view sample case studies and multimedia content, please visit http://www.nlns.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.

A NEW VISION

New Leaders for New Schools
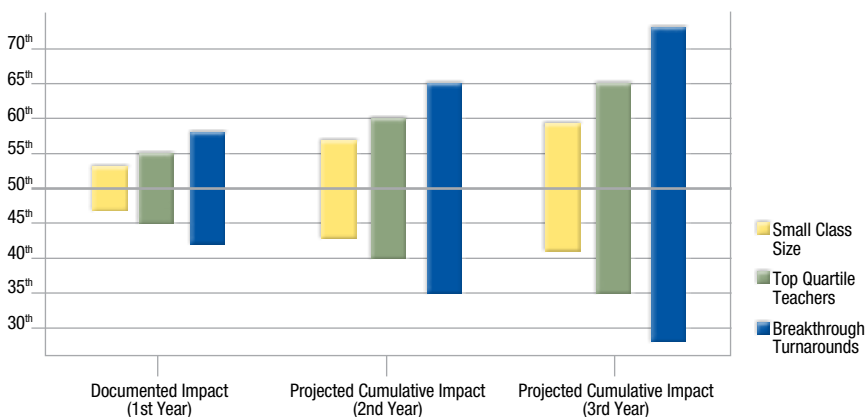
A NEW VISION FOR PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS

A new analysis by the RAND Corporation finds that, among the lowest scoring schools in a large urban system, there is a 15 percentile point gap in average student performance of schools experiencing the largest gains in both math and ELA relative to those with the smallest gains.[xi]

Since these high-gaining schools are overall twice as likely as other schools in the 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.

Just how far could those 15 percentile points go toward transforming our urban schools? The country's best large-scale, experimental study to test the impact of reducing class size found that being in a small class had a 6 percentile point impact on achievement.[xii] These results were considered so large that a number of other states have since adopted class size reduction policies. ***Attending a high-gaining school can have two and a half times the impact of being in a small class.***

Importantly, ***these gains are comparable to recent analyses documenting the differences between effective and ineffective teachers***. Having a teacher who ranks in the top quarter of effectiveness can make a "massive" difference in students' learning 10 percentile points in a year. If economically disadvantaged children had four high-quality teachers in a row, researchers have noted that we could conceivably close the achievement gap.[xiii] In fact, in Dallas, students who were fortunate enough to have three strong teachers in a row moved up to the top quarter of the district's achievement. Meanwhile, unfortunate students mired in weak classes moved down to the bottom quarter of achievement.[xiv]

Percentile Effects of Various Reform Strategies Over Time

Legend: Small Class Size; Top Quartile Teachers; Breakthrough Turnarounds

X-axis: Documented Impact (1st Year); Projected Cumulative Impact (2nd Year); Projected Cumulative Impact (3rd Year)

The nation's challenge is to make certain that students have high-quality learning gains year after year, which means having **whole schools** that function effectively. As compelling and critical as teacher effectiveness is, if our policy conversations focus only on individual teachers, we will miss the mark — neither turning around schools nor ensuring sustained achievement gains. 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 followed by equally effective teachers, with half the gains being lost the following year, and nearly all of the gains lost within two years.[xv]

One explanation for these losses is that students rarely have consistently strong teachers year after year, particularly students attending the lowest-performing schools.[xvi] The quality of teachers varies more widely inside a school than teacher quality varies on average across schools.[xvii] In other words, most of the variation in teacher effectiveness happens *within* schools, not between them. In schools with significant school-level achievement gains, such as those highlighted in RAND's analysis, New Leaders for New Schools believes that these breakthrough gains come from a critical combination of both teachers and principals. The school improvement literature supports this notion.

Research increasingly demonstrates that the combined human capital of both teachers and principals is critical to solving our education crisis.[xviii] In a comprehensive review of the research on school leadership, Robert Marzano and his colleagues found that nearly 60% of the within-school variance in student achievement can be accounted for by teacher and principal quality. This finding is not surprising since education is a people-intensive field, and principals and teachers make up the bulk of a school's human capital. Furthermore, within the human capital equation, teachers and principals are nearly equally important. Teachers account for a third and principals a quarter of the school's total impact on student achievement, despite the reality that teachers directly instruct students and principals influence achievement indirectly through their leadership actions.[xix] How does one person, then, have such a large impact? Principal actions to build a positive school-wide learning culture, manage the school's use of time, and model personal leadership shape the environment in which students learn. Furthermore, their instructional leadership and management of teachers directly impact teacher effectiveness and thus also drive student achievement.

School-Based Factors Affecting Student Achievement

Principal Impact
25%

Teacher Impact
33%

Human capital accounts for nearly 60% of a school's impact on student achievement
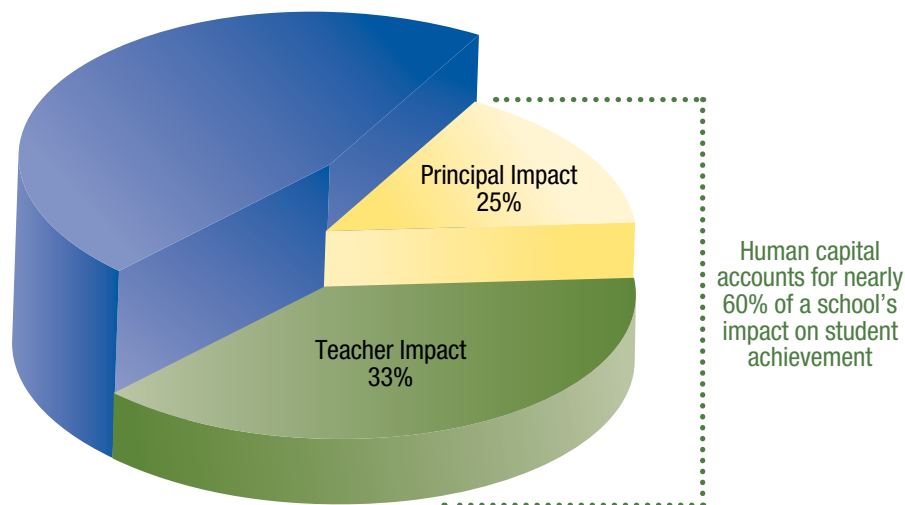
If we understand a principal's work in this way, we must develop a new vision for what it means to be a successful principal, and of the policy contexts that enable breakthrough school improvement. New Leaders for New Schools strongly advocates for the entire education field — states, districts, and philanthropic funders in particular — to adopt the following three-pronged approach to defining principal effectiveness and to align their human capital policies to this definition.

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.

Given that education is by nature a human capital effort, it is crucial that we explore and implement productive ways to think about educators' differential effectiveness. By thinking about and tracking our effectiveness, we will be able to learn from how well we are doing and devise new ways to improve our efforts—both of which are in educators' professional interests and in the interests of children. This learning cycle of studying principal and teacher effectiveness is especially important for human capital development organizations, in partnership with the school systems they serve.

Principal Effectiveness and Ongoing Learning at New Leaders for New Schools

Over the past decade, New Leaders for New Schools has developed a human capital model that focuses on urban schools most in need of improvement. We initially hypothesized what research has since validated: low-performing schools don't turn around without a strong leader.[xx] We began recruiting, selecting, and training highly effective school leaders in partnership with high-need districts, establishing the systems to track and learn from the actual impact of our work in order to better inform the field about the kinds of skills and efforts that highly effective principals need in order to turn around their schools.
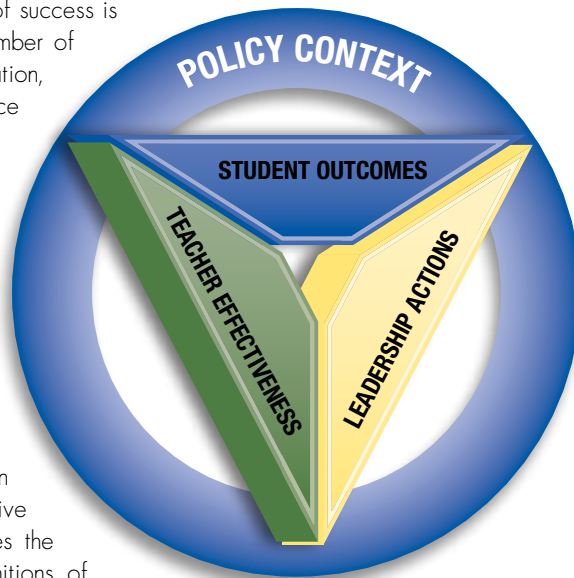
Analyses of student achievement outcomes of principals selected and trained by New Leaders for New Schools show impressive results, but — absent further program improvements and needed policy and system changes — they do not yet exhibit the consistency or pace of improvement required to meet our goal of preparing every child in a New Leader-led school for success in college, careers, and citizenship. On the one hand, 31% of New Leader-led schools this year made the breakthrough achievement gains needed to turn schools around, up from 15% two years ago. New Leaders K-8 principals beyond their second year are nearly twice as likely to make these breakthrough gains as other principals.[xxi] 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.[xxii] New Leader-led high schools 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.[xxiii] 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.)[xxiv] 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 beyond our 31% of schools experiencing breakthrough gains is not yet enough to make substantial headway toward our goal high adademic achievement for every student in schools led by New Leaders principals.

As a human capital organization, we are committed to learning from our results to drive our own improvement. So while our data indicate that our program is an important part of our districts' efforts to turn around historic urban achievement patterns, we also recognize and study indicators that show we have room to grow. For example, we have found that high school achievement gains for many students in our schools — students who begin their secondary careers years behind their peers — are particularly difficult to improve early on, even while we can see improvements in high school graduation rates and reduced drop-out rates. We have embarked upon a full-scale secondary initiative to both learn about this challenge and to use that knowledge to improve our training and supports for secondary principals. We are also exploring the measurement challenges of high school achievement, given that our principals on average are succeeding in keeping more students in school, and these students are often those struggling the most academically.

In another learning area, we have found that while an important subset of first-year principals can lead breakthrough gains in even the lowest-achieving schools, most first-year principals make school-wide changes that take until the second year to show results. By bringing our fieldwork learning into our training program and focusing our program design efforts on our support for early tenure principals, first-year school leaders have increasingly improved their performance. Additionally, we are engaging in significant fieldwork in partnership with the RAND Corporation to learn more about how to ensure strong beginnings for new urban principals.

While we have learned some key lessons from studying these areas of improvement, some of our most important insights and program enhancements have come from studying the highest-performing principals within our community. As a centerpiece of our learning program, New Leaders for New Schools is conducting an ongoing study of the specific principal actions that drive breakthrough student achievement gains: *The Urban Excellence Framework.™* Our principals are already twice as likely to make these gains as their district counterparts, but we know that even that will not be enough to meet our goal of preparing every child in a New Leader-led school for success in college, careers, and citizenship. To do so will require that many more of our principals understand and are capable of doing what it takes to become highly effective. It will also require that states and districts understand the actions principals must take to drive breakthrough gains — the third prong in New Leaders for New Schools' vision for defining principal effectiveness — and that they develop policies to support principals in taking them.

THE URBAN EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK™

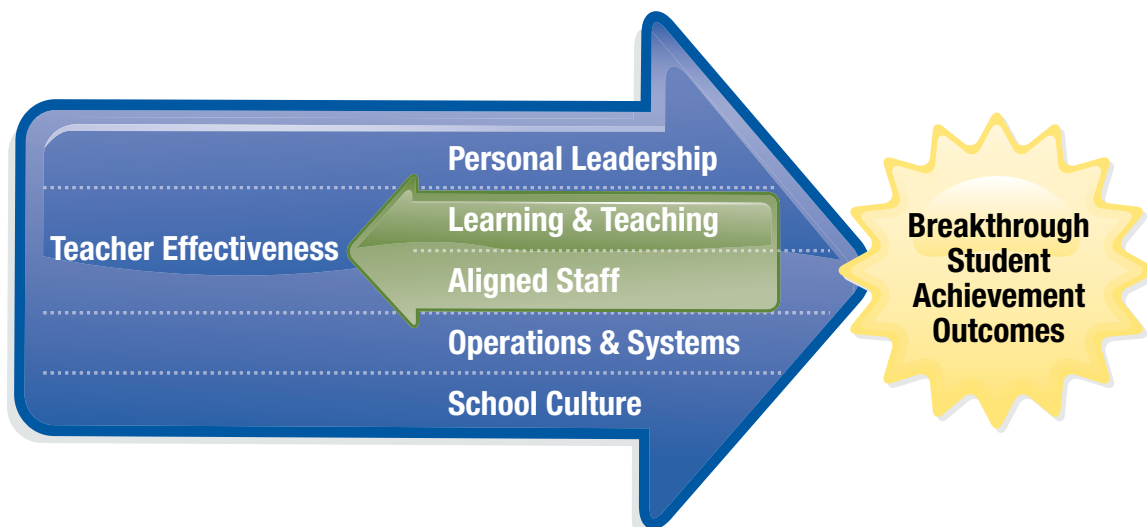## Leadership Actions to Drive Breakthrough Student Learning Gains and Teacher Effectiveness

Overview

The *Urban Excellence Framework™ (UEF™)* describes the leadership actions that New Leaders for New Schools has found to be critical for driving breakthrough student learning gains and teacher effectiveness. Developed over the past two years, the *UEF™* is rooted in data from over 60 site visits comparing incremental and breakthrough-gaining urban public schools in 10 cities across the country. The *UEF™* also incorporates insights from an extensive review of the available research on the practices of effective leaders, effective schools, turnaround schools, secondary schools, and English Language Learners, including a full review of all the practices documented by the Effective Practice Incentive Community.*

The *UEF™* focuses on five categories of a principal's work: ensuring rigorous, goal- and data-driven **learning and teaching**; building and managing a high-quality **staff** aligned to the school's vision of success for every student; developing an achievement- and belief-based **school–wide culture**; instituting **operations and systems** to support learning; and modeling the **personal leadership** that sets the tone for all student and adult relationships in the school.

All five *UEF™* categories are necessary to drive breakthrough student and teacher growth. A principal's work in the first two categories — *learning and teaching* and *aligned staff* — is especially focused on the development of teacher effectiveness.

Urban Excellence Framework™ Categories

Personal Leadership

Learning & Teaching

Aligned Staff

Teacher Effectiveness

Operations & Systems

School Culture

Breakthrough Student Achievement Outcomes

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* For more information about EPIC and to view sample case studies and multimedia content, please visit http://www.nlns.org/uef.jsp

Every category of the *UEF™* is further divided into a subset of key levers, each representing a collection of actions taken by highly effective principals. The categories and key levers are not likely to surprise most veteran educators; researchers and practitioners have long understood the importance of these areas of work. What distinguishes the *UEF™* is its focus on breakthrough gaining schools and the specificity with which it details the actions taken by highly effective principals.

Learning and Teaching
- Curriculum aligned to both state and college-readiness standards
- Consistent and quality classroom practices, routines, and teaching strategies
- Utilization of diverse student-level data to drive instructional improvement
- Individual and common planning for effective instruction
- Pyramid of academic interventions

Aligned Staff
- Recruitment, selection, and placement of aligned staff
- Consistent feedback and professional learning to drive instructional improvement
- Monitoring and management of staff performance
- High-performing instructional leadership team

Culture
- Adults and students champion school vision and mission
- Adults demonstrate personal responsibility for the success of every student
- Adults and students live a school code of conduct aligned to the school's vision, mission, and values
- Adults insist on and support students in having high aspirations for themselves
- Families are engaged in supporting their child's/youth's learning, conduct, and college/career planning

Operations and Systems
- Tracking of clear and focused school goals and strategy adjustment based on progress
- Time use aligned to school-wide goals
- Budget, external partnerships, and facilities aligned to strategic plan
- Stakeholder communication and school system relationship managed to ensure a focus on learning

Personal Leadership
- Belief-based, Goal-driven Leadership: Leader consistently demonstrates belief in the potential of every student to achieve at high levels
- Culturally Competent Leadership: Leader develops deep understanding of their urban context and actively moves the expectations of others in order to ensure high academic achievement for every student
- Interpersonal Skills, Facilitative Leadership: Leader builds relationships and facilitates active communities of adults and students dedicated to reaching school goals
- Adaptive Leadership: Leader drives and manages the organizational change process to increase student achievement
- Resilient Leadership: Leader demonstrates self-awareness, ongoing learning, and resiliency in the service of continuous improvement

Diagnosis and the Stages of School Development

Effective principals in all kinds of schools have important work to do in every category and every key lever of *The Urban Excellence Framework.™* To achieve breakthrough student learning gains, their specific actions must be tailored to meet an individual school's most pressing needs. Markedly different interventions are required in a turnaround school than in a school that is already high-performing, though they both share the goal of breakthrough gains. It is therefore imperative that a highly effective principal be able to **diagnose** their school's needs, set goals, and take action based on a robust evaluation of a school's practices within each *UEF™* key lever.

Prior research on "beating the odds" and 90/90/90 schools proves that children in high-poverty schools can and do succeed academically at high levels, and the research even details the school practices that have transformed these schools from good to great. But this research is generally focused on what those schools look like at the *end* of their transformation process, not how they evolved *over time*. A principal who enters a low-performing school can use this research to imagine a future "desired state" of school practices, but those practices often seem distant and unattainable given the school's current realities.

The *UEF™* fills this gap by identifying distinct **stages** of school development. Stages describe how a school's practices — the observed behaviors of staff and students — evolve over time. Each key lever has three distinct stages of development:

- Many Stage 1 school practices are focused on establishing consistency in a school that has been chaotic or plagued by ineffective adult practices. Examples of Stage 1 practices include consistent instructional strategies across classrooms and consistent code of conduct expectations and management by all adults in the building.
- Stage 2 school practices build on the work from Stage 1 and tend to focus on meeting the diverse individual needs of adults and students in the school, including individual development plans for teachers and a much deeper use of student-level data for instructional and resource planning.
- Stage 3 school practices are closely aligned to those found in the "effective schools" literature, including systems to immediately identify and support any students not yet meeting proficiency and demonstrated student understanding and ownership for their success and learning outcomes.

Since the lowest-performing schools often do not have even the Stage 1 school practices in place, we also use the term "Stage 0" to refer to schools currently lacking many of these *UEF™* school practices. Figures A and B each show more detailed examples of how a practice evolves over time:

FIGURE A. Sample Practice across the Stages of School Development: School-wide consistency of quality classroom practices, routines, and teaching strategies

Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
There are no agreed-upon learning routines and/or instructional practices or the implementation of them is inconsistent	Routines, instructional practices, and learning environment are consistent across classrooms and matched to meet grade-level expectations with a particular focus on consistent instructional strategies for literacy and math.	Routines, instructional practices, and learning environment are consistent across classrooms and matched to meet grade-level expectations in all content areas	Routines, instructional practices, and learning environment are consistent across classrooms and matched to meet grade-level expectations in all content areas All teachers implement the school-wide classroom practices, routines, and teaching strategies consistently and with quality

FIGURE B. Sample Practice across the Stages of School Development: High-performing instructional leadership team

Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
No instructional leadership team is in place, or a team is in place but is not functioning, or a team is functioning but not aligned to the school's goals	High-performing instructional leadership team is in place and begins conducting staff observations	Leadership team members serve as instructional leaders who work with the principal's confidence in their ability to lead effective teacher team meetings focused on student-learning data and student work.	Leadership team consistently models and enforces school-wide philosophy, core values, responsibility, and efficacy
		Leadership team of fully aligned and highly skilled staff is in place and directly focused on weekly discussions of student learning outcomes to target key needs for instructional program or school culture. Note: this team may be separate from required district leadership team structures	Highest-skilled and fully aligned teachers receive substantial leadership opportunities and are supported in taking on these roles (even to the point of leaving the school to become leaders in other schools if necessary for their continued development)

Armed with an understanding of stages, highly effective principals frequently diagnose their school's practices and prioritize the few, focused, and most crucial areas for improvement. Their goal is always to move the few selected practices to the next stage, and as school-wide practices progress to a new stage, students make breakthrough learning gains.

Having identified the practices for development, effective principals can then turn to the *UEF™* for help in matching a school practice to an effective principal action. If a diagnosis reveals Stage 1 practices, they take Stage 2 actions to push the school to the next level. Principals in most turnaround schools will find that their school's practices are not yet Stage 1; rather, they are Stage 0 across most key levers. Turnaround principals must quickly take action to put Stage 1 practices in place and set their schools on the path toward success.

FIGURE C. Sample Principal Actions across the Stages of School Development: School-wide consistency of quality classroom practices, routines, and teaching strategies

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Identify the school-wide non-negotiables for routines, instructional practices, and learning in environment in every classroom. Put in writing and make fully transparent to staff	Review and revise school-wide routines, practices, and strategies based on student learning data	Consistently model and provide feedback to teachers about the school-wide classroom practices, routines, and teaching strategies
Walk through every classroom for 5-10 minutes at least 2-3 times per week to monitor and ensure consistent implementation of the non-negotiables. Provide feedback on progress within 48 hours; include discussions of specific student work and data	Conduct professional development on high-quality classroom experiences for students, including building strong connections to students, relevance, and increasing the level of debate/dialogue and critical thinking skills expected in the classroom	Share professional development and observation work with highly skilled and aligned instructional leadership team

FIGURE D. Sample Principal Actions across the Stages of School Development: High-performing instructional leadership team

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Immediately review any existing instructional leader roles (AP, content coach/specialist, teacher leader or grade level leader) to ensure full alignment to mission and school wide approach to instruction and culture. If there is any lack of alignment, take immediate steps to remove or replace	Utilize great teachers who share values, beliefs, and commitment to lead for key positions on the Leadership Team and develop succession plans	Provide career counseling and support to all effective teachers and leadership team members, including support for transitioning to more senior leadership positions in other schools if necessary for their continued development
Build instructional Leadership Team that includes aligned and highly skilled staff with range of expertise	Coach the team leaders through observation and feedback. Delegate authority, drill down personally, and create clarity around decision making for school-wide concerns	Build systems for distributed leadership
Begin training Leadership Team members on observation/performance management expectations and process and on effective team meeting protocols and processes for looking at student outcomes and planning responsive strategies	Continue to build capacity of Leadership Team members to conduct observations and provide effective coaching and feedback using a specific observation protocol	

In taking these actions, a principal's overall leadership style often shifts from stage to stage as well. While principals in turnaround schools build strong staff relationships and gather key early input on instructional and school culture strategies, they are also quite directive about the need for the school to move quickly to more consistent Stage 1 practices in these areas. Stage 1 principals play a strong leadership role in setting consistent expectations, supporting adults in building the necessary skills to meet expectations, and holding them accountable for doing so. As the school moves into Stage 2, the principal builds a more extended and aligned leadership team with a shared approach to

instructional improvement. As leadership team members deepen their skills in responding to a range of teacher and student development needs, the principal often moves toward a more distributed style of management.

Of course, every school's improvement process is unique. Moving a school from chaos to stability, or even from good to great, may take years of hard work by all of the adults and children in the community, and there will undoubtedly be missteps along the way. Still, this concept of stages is critical for principals as they embark upon diagnosis and action planning to drive breakthrough student learning gains.

Leadership to Drive Teacher Effectiveness

Effective principals recognize that the most powerful thing they can do to increase student learning is to increase the effectiveness of classroom teachers. Yet even in the age of the Instructional Leader, few principals have the tools they need to make a meaningful difference. Many find themselves constrained by school schedules that lack time for professional development or by administrative duties that keep them out of classrooms. As The New Teacher Project recently described in its *Widget Effect* report, there is no expectation that principals will even make distinctions between teachers based on instructional effectiveness. Few school systems allow principals who do make these distinctions to recognize and reward highly effective teachers or to remove consistently ineffective teachers from the school system.[xxv] Principals are rarely required to or supported in implementing talent management processes that are common to nearly every other job sector: selective hiring, meaningful evaluation, ongoing professional development, and when necessary, dismissal of underperformers.

New Leaders for New Schools has found that principals who make breakthrough gains in student achievement do everything in their power to minimize these obstacles and to maximize teacher effectiveness. Highly effective principals have carved out a new, unprecedented role for themselves as human capital managers, and they continually deepen their focus on providing the instructional leadership necessary to catalyze teacher and student growth.

Aligned Staff: The principal as human capital manager

Research verifies what students, parents, and educators themselves already know: not all teachers are the same, and their differences do matter. A child taught by one of the most effective teachers may experience as much as an additional full year's worth of academic growth compared to a child taught by one of the least. Given access to four years of great teachers, low-income children may learn enough to close the achievement gap.[xxvi]

District policies and practices, however, rarely require and often make it very difficult for principals to effectively manage their teaching staffs. When it comes to teacher hiring, evaluation, leadership positions, dismissal, and professional development, highly effective principals must go beyond their traditional roles — sometimes even operating outside district norms — to play this crucial role as human capital managers. These school leaders guard religiously their right to decide who teaches in their schools, prioritizing students over any external adult concerns.

Teacher Hiring. Highly effective principals never stop recruiting new teachers. Year-round recruiting is crucial in urban districts where turnover is high and hiring systems can be inefficient. Many highly effective principals look for qualified candidates beyond the traditional district pool, often turning to surrounding districts, local nonprofits, alternative certification programs, and their own professional networks. They seek out candidates who demonstrate the following competencies: first and foremost, a genuine connection to and interest in students; second, a deep commitment to the belief that every student is capable of academic success; third, a track record of demonstrating effectiveness through measurable student learning gains; and finally, essential personal attributes such as a willingness to make teaching practice public and to constantly learn and improve, teamwork, leadership, and cultural competency. These criteria are the basis of a rigorous selection process that extends beyond the traditional interview; for example, by actually testing a candidate's ability to work in a team or to receive constructive feedback after a demo lesson.

Teacher Evaluation. The vast majority of state and district mandated teacher evaluation systems rate nearly all teachers as good or great and produce very little actionable knowledge.[xxvii] Highly effective principals supplement these evaluations with deeper, ongoing processes for performance management. Rather than observing each teacher once or twice per year, highly effective principals and their leadership teams are in every teacher's classroom as

often as one or more times per week. These observations are shorter and more focused, and the principal always provides timely feedback and follows up on growth areas. When a teacher is not demonstrating effectiveness, the frequency of observations and feedback increases to provide more support to the teacher and to provide the principal with more information about the areas where the teacher is struggling. Highly effective principals also develop data systems that allow frequent measurements of student learning to enrich performance conversations. By combining these two elements, principals are not only able to identify top and bottom performers; they can also develop a clear picture of the strengths and learning needs for every teacher in the building.

Professional Development. In many schools, teacher evaluations will likely reveal some highly effective teachers and potentially some ineffective teachers who are uninterested in growth. Those in the middle, the vast majority of teachers, also require special attention to meet the goal of breakthrough student learning gains. Highly effective principals focus on providing them with the strong support and professional development they need to reach higher levels of effectiveness. In schools led by highly effective principals, to teach is also to be a constant learner. Over time, every teacher works with the principal to build an individualized professional learning program based on their strengths and needs as identified by student data and frequent observations. Common learning needs across the staff are addressed by teacher teams or at the whole-school level. Professional development activities eschew the traditional one-day workshop model. New research indicates that it takes 50 or more hours of learning for teachers to adopt a new practice.[xxviii] Accordingly, highly effective principals embed development activities in teachers' day-to-day work, and they focus in on a few high-impact learning areas. A typical learning cycle might include the following components: a series of workshops where the principal, lead teachers, or coaches model core elements of a new practice for the entire faculty; weekly grade-level or subject area teacher team meetings to provide an opportunity for faculty to role-play the practice and work together to troubleshoot implementation issues; feedback from frequent classroom observations focuses on the practice in question; and periodic evaluation of student learning data to monitor impact. Taken together, these efforts become a robust and supportive learning system that is deeply embedded in teachers' daily work.

Teacher–Leaders. Principals cannot lead schools to make dramatic achievement gains on their own: the support of an instructional leadership team is crucial, especially in larger or secondary schools. Highly effective principals select leadership team members based on performance data and observations. They work hard to develop emerging leaders and to continue growing leadership teams over time — for example, by facilitating leadership team meetings that model what they expect of grade-level or content area team meetings or by conducting joint teacher observations and comparing feedback. As leadership team members develop, they are entrusted with more and more responsibility. Leadership teams make key decisions about curriculum and instruction based on frequent analysis of student learning data. They also assist in new teacher hiring, participate in the ongoing observations and professional development of teaching staff, and model school culture norms. Members often lead grade-level or content area teacher teams focused on lesson planning, academic interventions, and teacher professional development. It should be noted that membership on the leadership team is but one way that highly effective principals reward highly effective teachers. In order to inspire ongoing professional development and to retain their best staff, principals do everything in their power to create a career ladder within their schools. When a teacher proves ready, these principals extend the ladder beyond their schools, contributing talented assistant principals and principals to the broader district.

Dismissal of Underperforming Teachers. Highly effective principals set clear expectations for teacher performance aligned to their goals for dramatically increasing student learning, and they focus the majority of their time on providing support to teachers so that they can meet those standards. Often, teachers who are unable or unwilling to develop to meet standards realize that they may not be a good fit for this particular school, and they decide on their own to transition out. In the case of the most troubling low performers, principals pursue formal dismissal from the school, and where appropriate, the system as well. Highly effective principals do not make this decision lightly. Already frequent classroom observers, they become a constant presence, documenting what they observe, continuing to offer support, and noting efforts to develop. If a teacher still cannot or will not improve, principals are not afraid to have difficult conversations or to remove the teacher through formal processes. Highly effective principals do whatever it takes to ensure that every teacher in the building is truly capable of facilitating learning at levels that prepare students for success in college, careers, and citizenship or is rapidly developing this capability.

Human Capital Management in Action:
LIGHTHOUSE COMMUNITY CHARTER, K-8 SCHOOL IN OAKLAND CA

At Lighthouse Community Charter school in California's Bay Area, students have gained a combined 48.3% in math and English Language Arts proficiency in the past two years. In speaking with New Leaders principal Melissa Barnes-Dholakia, one thing becomes clear: creating a human capital system that supports and develops teachers is essential in creating a sustainable, high-quality school where students make breakthrough learning gains.

When Barnes-Dholakia joined the school six years ago, she knew she had to build a strong shared commitment across teachers to drive achievement gains. Embarking on a deep professional development effort to build staff capacity, her first step was to identify and target key teachers who could act as her "front line" and help to develop other teachers on staff. These teachers became a part of the leadership team with a variety of responsibilities, ranging from helping to plan professional development to conducting teacher observations.

In hiring new teachers, Barnes-Dholakia collaborated with her leadership team to screen new hires for their philosophies on standards and testing and their willingness to work as a member of a team. The new hires attended an extra week of pre-school year induction activities and were paired with a more experienced partner teacher as an additional support in their first year at Lighthouse. The partner structure allows every teacher to be regularly observed and to observe their peers as part of their commitment to ongoing learning and development. New teachers have more frequent check-ins with the principal, more observation and planning time with the instructional coach, and meet weekly with their grade-level partner and the coach to analyze student work and plan for upcoming instruction. These differentiated structures support the teacher's growth and informs the leadership teams' decisions on topics for professional development.

Barnes-Dholakia's systems create spaces for teacher teams to meet weekly, and she works closely with the lead teachers to assess the teams' needs and provide targeted supports. All of the Lighthouse staff take part in professional development sessions, and Barnes-Dholakia and lead teachers work with those who are struggling to create individualized professional development plans that identify targets and areas for improvement to create an additional layer of support. However, when teachers show no improvement over time, Barnes-Dholakia is comfortable counseling them out to schools where they might be a better fit or, in the case of those who are unable to develop, out of the classroom altogether.

At Lighthouse, the systems, structures, and leadership consistency allow the school to continue to make breakthrough student achievement gains despite inevitable turnover. For example, in conjunction with her lead teachers, Barnes-Dholakia has been able to develop staff's ability to analyze and use interim assessment data. Teachers now do the majority of the data analysis. Following each interim assessment of student progress, teachers are paired with a grade level partner, and they review where their students did well and where students struggled. The staff constantly uses data to reassess its current practices. Under Barnes-Dholakia's human capital development, all of the staff take an active role in creating the school's culture and maintaining its instructional quality.

Learning and Teaching: The principal as instructional leader

By the very nature of the work, human capital management in schools is deeply connected to learning and teaching practices. To measurably improve teacher effectiveness, a principal must possess a deep knowledge about the art and science of teaching that will allow him or her to act as both a human capital manager and as an instructional leader.

Instructional leadership includes a variety of principal actions to establish school-wide efficacy in curriculum and student interventions — areas covered extensively by existing research and in the New Leaders for New Schools training program. In our visits to schools led by highly effective principals, we found a depth of implementation in three additional areas that set them apart from their peers: building school-wide consistency of instructional strategies, using diverse student-level and school-wide data to drive instructional improvement, and creating the conditions for teachers to learn, plan, analyze, and adapt together.

Consistency of Instructional Strategies. Highly effective principals work with teachers to create a high-quality, consistent learning experience in every classroom and for every student. They set clear standards for the essential things they expect every teacher to do, and this in turn gives students a clear sense of how they are expected to go about learning in school, not just in each individual teacher's classroom. Creating this consistency is particularly important in early turnaround schools where teachers may lack important instructional skills and variation between classrooms undermines the cohesion of the learning program and the school culture. Even in turnarounds, highly effective principals do not achieve consistency through scripted "teacher-proof" lessons; they seek instead to rapidly develop teachers' skills in implementing proven learning techniques.

As they drive toward instructional consistency, highly effective principals also recognize the importance of allowing teachers liberty to innovate and to do what they have always done — adjust their daily practice to meet students' individual learning needs. Leaders do not, however, compromise on important fundamentals. Lessons must have clearly defined learning objectives; transition times must be used effectively; there must be a mix of small group, whole group, and individual learning; and staff must keep timely grade and student performance information. As the school develops over time, the principal requires that more advanced practices be shared; for example, specific ways of differentiating instruction or using formative assessments to check for understanding.

When highly effective principals ask teachers to implement new practices or to improve upon existing ones, they do so purposefully and provide a wide range of supports. By conducting frequent observations, principals are able to diagnose the most pressing common needs across the faculty. They select a small number of instructional strategies to focus on at a time, offer professional development directly or through their leadership teams, and give feedback on each teacher's development after every classroom walkthrough. As a common understanding of the practice takes hold, teachers also share a starting point from which they can continue learning together.

Utilization of Diverse Student–Level Data to Drive Instructional Improvement. In schools making breakthrough student achievement gains, highly effective principals require staff to make every decision based on data. The principal and their staff value what they can learn from required state or district assessments, but their use of data extends far beyond those tests. The principal leads staff to deeply integrate student-level learning data into daily instruction through the use of interim and formative assessments. Teachers, individually and in teams, use these data to build lesson plans, differentiate instruction, and plan for academic interventions. As a school moves toward Stages 2 and 3, students develop a sense of ownership over their learning data and hold themselves accountable for making continued progress.

Highly effective principals and their leadership teams demonstrate expertise in managing school-wide data. They create systems that allow them to monitor every class and every student's progress toward academic standards. These systems are particularly important in secondary schools, where it is crucial to identify incoming students who will need remediation or acceleration and students who may be off-track toward graduation. Highly effective principals

use these types of data in their work with teachers on instruction and student interventions, and they also use them in concert with frequent classroom observations to guide each teacher's professional development. 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.*xxix

An instructional and staff development model based on robust student data need not create a climate of constant "test prep." Though formal assessments are important for schools and for individual students, New Leaders for New Schools and our highest gaining principals believe in teaching to and monitoring progress toward rigorous standards for college and career readiness. These standards include higher order thinking skills and often go far beyond a state's bar for proficiency. We also recognize the importance of creative teaching and a sense of joy in learning, and the breakthrough gaining schools we have studied prove that all of these elements are necessary for student success.

Teacher Team Meetings, Common Planning, and Professional Learning Communities. New Leaders principals have reported — and a wide body of research confirms — that when it comes to improving practice, the strongest learning comes from those closest to the work. Structures, processes, and leadership must be in place to build communities capable of learning together effectively. This is true for the New Leaders principal community, and it is true within schools as well; each school building must become a laboratory of adult learning to develop teacher effectiveness and to achieve breakthrough gains for students.

Highly effective principals ensure that teachers have common planning time to conduct systematic, non-defensive examination of student work. These meetings are not just used for loose collaboration around topics that may not have a direct impact on instruction; rather, the principal guides teachers to use them for experimentation, analysis, self-critique, and data-based decision making. In addition to meeting short-term needs for instruction and intervention planning, the meetings are opportunities for job-embedded, peer-centered professional development. The principal and leadership team use consistent protocols and tools to guide teachers in having productive conversations about expectations, teaching and re-teaching, student learning across grade levels and across the curriculum, and group critique of classroom practices. Highly effective principals also remember to use this time to celebrate and to honor successes. The same standards apply to leadership team meetings focused more broadly on the whole school and on supporting other adults. Teacher team and leadership team meetings, then, are crucial in the effort to increase teacher effectiveness.

Because these meetings are so important, and because time is in many ways the currency of the school, highly effective principals structure the school schedule to maximize the time teachers spend working together. They build time for teacher team meetings and professional development into the normal school day, often in addition to planning and development time before or after school and in full-day planning sessions throughout the year. Highly effective principals also create more space for adult learning by developing teachers' ability to maximize instructional time within their lessons. They can then replace formerly wasted classroom time with adult learning time centered on the delivery of higher quality teaching.

A principal's twin roles as manager of aligned human capital and instructional leader are the primary drivers of school-wide teacher effectiveness. Their efforts in these capacities have been proven to increase teachers' quality of instruction, job satisfaction, and retention. Above all, the work principals do to drive teacher effectiveness has an enormous impact on student outcomes.

"WHAT OCCURS AT THE DATA TALK MEETINGS IS INTRICATELY ENTWINED WITH MY TEACHING. THEY REALLY **HELP MY TEACHING FEEL MORE PURPOSEFUL** AND MORE CONCRETE AND CONNECTED TO WHAT THE STUDENTS ARE DOING. YOU KNOW IT'S KIND OF EASY TO FALL BACK INTO, 'WELL I'M GOING TO TEACH THEM THIS AND I HOPE THEY GET IT,' BUT THE DATA TALKS FORCE YOU TO SEE IF THEY ARE REALLY GETTING IT."

Third grade teacher at Monarch Academy in Oakland, CA
Led by New Leader Tatiana Epanchin-Troyan

*   To view samples of these case studies, please visit http://www.nlns.org/uef.jsp

Instructional Leadership in Action:

IDA B WELLS ACADEMY, MIDDLE SCHOOL IN MEMPHIS TN

Prior to New Leaders principal Tamika Carwell's arrival, Ida B. Wells Academy in Memphis had made some initial gains in student achievement. As the new instructional leader, her dual challenges were to help maintain the positive work of the school while also creating urgency around areas that still needed improvement. From 2007 to 2008, student proficiency rates jumped from the mid-70s to over 95% in both math and ELA.

In her first year, Carwell assessed a weakness in student writing using both student data and interviews with staff. As a skill essential in putting students on the path toward college and career readiness, her priority became clear — students needed more instruction on basic writing components. Carwell saw writing as the connecting piece across all subjects and she wanted teachers to have consistent standards, expectations, and instructional strategies across classrooms. She formed a "writing team" and charged it with developing a plan to dramatically improve students' writing through interdisciplinary instruction. She led the team in examining data from previous years, assessing the current student body, and determining a plan of action. Throughout the semester, the writing team followed a cycle of teaching, assessing, providing feedback, and re-teaching.

Carwell strengthened the staff's collaborative structure by having teachers meet weekly to discuss trends, success, and areas of concern while they revised lessons to meet those areas of need. Additionally, she provided ongoing feedback to staff based on her observations of their teaching. Non-ELA teachers improved their writing instruction through the school-wide professional development sessions, as well as by drawing from the ELA teacher-developed lesson plans and strategies for teaching writing skills. These math, science, and social studies teachers were asked to slowly incorporate these strategies into their daily lessons, warm-up activities, and homework assignments. No matter what subject areas they officially taught, every teacher became a writing teacher.

Creating this campaign within the building built a strong sense of collegiality among all teachers. Writing became an Ida B. Wells issue, not simply an eighth-grade ELA issue. Each staff member assumed responsibility for improving student's writing and held one another accountable for fulfilling that role. The entire student body and staff were a part of the process and graciously accepted the accountability and responsibility for ensuring success on the eighth-grade TCAP Writing Assessment for the 2006—07 school year.

Following the success of that initiative, Carwell began to work on taking students beyond the state's writing benchmarks. Working with her leadership team, she developed a plan of action and then worked with each content teacher to tailor the plan for their subject. Reflecting on her experience, Carwell states, "I believe true instructional leadership begins with the 'head,' the principal of the school. A school leader must take time to thoroughly assess the instructional needs of the students, as well as be able to provide guidance and support for meeting those needs. The principal must lead by example and remain supportive and patient, because change is not easily accepted and is not an overnight process."

" I WANT [ALL OF OUR KIDS] ASPIRING TO BE SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS, DOCTORS AND TEACHERS…
I WANT THEM ASPIRING TO BE A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE.
I WANT THEM ASPIRING TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
I WANT THEIR HORIZONS TO BE LIMITLESS. "

President Barack Obama
99th Annual meeting of the NAACP

School Culture

Principals who lead their schools to make breakthrough achievement gains take a variety of actions to build a culture centered on the school's mission of academic success for every student. Many of these actions have been written about extensively in existing research: For example, leaders create rituals, structures, and an ethos among adults that builds a "work hard, get smart" value system across the school and ensures that every student feels supported by at least one trusting relationship with an adult in the building. They also partner with families and community groups to reinforce their vision for student success beyond the school's walls and to provide additional supports for the whole child. In our visits to schools led by highly effective principals, New Leaders for New Schools found a focus on all of these important areas of work. We also found a particular depth of practice in the following two areas: implementing a code of conduct aligned to the school's values and building student aspiration.

Code of Conduct Aligned to School Values. All highly effective principals implement a clear, consistent student and adult code of conduct as part of their efforts to build a high-achieving school culture. The code of conduct reinforces positive learning behaviors such as demonstrating consistent effort and showing respect for oneself and others. It also provides a framework for discipline when students fail to meet those expectations. In our visits to over 60 schools across the country, we have seen a wide range of approaches to positive behaviors and student discipline. The crucial element is that every adult in the building implements the code of conduct *in the same way*.

Implementing the code of conduct consistently across the school ensures that students know exactly what is expected of them in every classroom. It allows adults to build an age-appropriate curriculum that explicitly teaches students the skills they will need to meet those expectations. Rewards for positive behaviors and consequences for infractions are clear and understood throughout the entire school community, and they are primarily handled within the classroom, not in visits to the principal's office.

Over a short period of time, the clear, consistent code of conduct lifts the burden on individual teachers to develop their own approaches to classroom management. A school-wide approach means that no one teacher stands on his or her own, and this provides valuable scaffolding for novices. Teachers of all experience levels find it easier to focus on the core of their work: actual instruction. The principal, too, is free to serve as a coach and instructional leader rather than as a disciplinarian. All these elements combine to increase teacher job satisfaction, retention, and quality of student learning.

Though a clear, consistent code of conduct is necessary for all schools making breakthrough gains, it is of the utmost importance in turnaround schools. Principals who enter schools exhibiting Stage 0 or Stage 1 practices report that this work must be their first priority. They immediately develop existing staff or hire new teachers who are willing and able to implement a dramatic change in the school-wide approach to conduct. Reinforced by every adult in the building, every day, the positive aspects of the new code of conduct send a strong signal to students that coming to school will feel different from now on. On the discipline side, a unified approach from all teachers and administrators can be extraordinarily powerful in establishing order and creating an environment where other cultural and instructional improvements can flourish. Most of all, it ensures that every child feels safe and can concentrate on learning when they come to school.

Building Student Aspiration. Students are most likely to live up to the expectations of the code of conduct, to work hard, and to learn more when they are motivated by their own goals. Highly effective principals recognize that it is the work of adults to help students develop those goals and to connect their aspirations to academic achievement. To that end, principals support teachers of all grades in finding meaningful ways to present students with a wide variety of career and life options — all of which are rooted in a quality education that includes going to college. They create school-wide rituals to reinforce the school's mission of college and career readiness for every student, and at every possible opportunity, they celebrate markers of success along the way.

At the secondary level, highly effective principals model a practice they expect of all teachers: connecting every single conversation with students to their goals for college and beyond. They require all students to create formal career plans based on their personal interests that include year-by-year steps to prepare for college. Highly effective secondary principals use resources creatively so that they can dedicate staff to supporting students through the college application process, from researching schools to applying, financial aid, and preparing to enter a new learning community.

Aspirational School Culture in Action:

KENWOOD ACADEMY, HIGH SCHOOL IN CHICAGO IL

Every day as part of morning announcements, the students at Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago hear over the loudspeaker, "Remember: The mission is college." At Kenwood, all members of the staff have committed to getting all students to college with the skills they need to succeed. Last year, 81% of students were on track to graduation, up from 58% three years earlier.

In building the school's culture, New Leaders principal Liz Kirby began by building the foundation. She believes that students' first year in high school is extremely critical, and as such, freshmen need intensive support and attention:

> *You have to love the freshmen AND keep the freshmen accountable.... When freshmen do well, they will do well throughout high school.... If they begin failing their freshman year, they create problems for the next four years, and that affects the school climate. So, if your freshmen do well, the whole school does well.*

At freshman orientation the school's mission is introduced and the tone is set for incoming students. From the beginning, Kirby's staff assures students that they will be pushed but supported. Kenwood made significant structural investments to institute supports for freshmen to keep them on track — these systems ultimately help students both to succeed in high school and to aspire to college. As freshman, students enter an advisory program focused on the development of the social and academic skills necessary to be a successful high school student. During this year, teachers take care to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that all Kenwood students go to college in order to build students' belief in themselves.

There is also a tutoring and learning center (TLC), a positive, not punitive, place that focuses on keeping freshmen on track and is heavily academic in nature. Students identified by teachers for TLC are required to attend, and others can go by choice. Additionally, there are team meetings among teachers to identify those students who need more counseling or more academic support. During these meetings they distinguish between students who just missed making the grade and those needing more intensive interventions.

Beyond the freshman year, students can find support at every juncture. Empowered and invested in their development, sophomores created their own mentoring program after noting to Kirby that they wanted additional support targeted toward their needs. Likewise, there is a strong junior program for preparing for tests, and a strong senior program for getting into college. Over time, the school's systems give students the necessary tools to take ownership of their learning and to be responsible and accountable for their successes. The students' aspirations to excel academically and attend college are demonstrated in student participation in the dual enrollment program with the University of Chicago and the supports that upperclassmen provide to underclassmen. Kenwood's teachers believe that, while they have to have great instructional approaches, it's the personal connection that gets students to believe in themselves. The culture and climate that Kirby has established have helped to ensure that students are staying in school, progressing toward graduation, and reaching ever higher levels of college and career readiness.

Operations and Systems

Highly effective principals use their budgets, facilities, and partnerships creatively to accomplish their mission of driving breakthrough gains for students. As discussed in the *Diagnosis and Stages* section of this paper, they set goals strategically and constantly re-evaluate to meet students' and teachers' most pressing needs.

Highly effective principals also focus deeply on their schools' use of time. They seek to maximize instructional time by developing teachers' skills within classrooms and minimizing interruptions throughout the school day. Most build core content learning into enrichment activities and social times, and many seek out ways to lengthen the school day or year. Yet little of this time will be valuable if it is not used in high quality ways. Highly effective principals therefore ensure that there is adequate time in every school week for teachers to meet with each other for professional development, data analysis, and instructional and intervention planning. Effective principals also carefully plan out the annual calendar, setting up induction and opening of school experiences, schedules for interim assessments, re-teaching and review times, and key dates and topics for professional development aligned to staff's identified needs. While this calendar can shift based on priorities, the initial planning ensures that these crucial activities occur throughout the year. Finally, effective principals carefully manage their own time, minimizing time spent on duties outside their core work of developing teacher effectiveness — in large part by creating a school code of conduct that empowers teachers to effectively manage discipline within their own classrooms.

Personal Leadership

A principal who can take effective action in all categories of his or her work and across all stages of school development must bring special knowledge, skills, orientations, and beliefs to the role. Above all, they must believe deeply in the potential of every child to succeed academically. As leaders, highly effective principals infuse this belief into every conversation with students, staff, and parents. They inspire all members of the school community to share a sense of possibility that children can do great things, as well as a sense of collective responsibility for ensuring that students realize their aspirations and are prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

Doing the work of school change requires that principals build strong relationships, especially with their teaching staffs. They must be able to help teachers manage the emotional challenge of rising expectations combined with entirely new ways of doing the work. And they must balance sensitivity with urgency in conversations about teacher development. Their message never strays: "Our kids can reach these goals. You can help them do it. It's my job to support you." When they meet resistance or when a teacher, despite support, cannot meet expectations, they are not afraid to have difficult conversations.

These leadership qualities — combined with the deep content knowledge required to lead school-wide instruction — are essential to the role of the highly effective principal.

" **YOU HAVE TO BE HUMBLE IN THIS POSITION.**
THE KEY TO CREATING THE CULTURE
IS BEING SEEN AS ROLLING UP YOUR SLEEVES AND GATHERING ON THE FLOOR WITH THE KIDS
AND DOING THE WORK JUST LIKE THEM. "

Michelle Pierre-Farid
New Leaders principal at Tyler Elementary School in Washington, D.C.

Personal Leadership in Action

Personal Leadership in Action:

FORT WORTHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BALTIMORE MD

When New Leaders principal Shaylin Todd entered Fort Worthington Elementary School in Baltimore, the school had had four leaders in three years. Staff morale was low, and many of the teachers were in survival mode, working in complete isolation without supports. To change the school's trajectory, Todd knew that she would have to inspire staff and students and provide a much needed sense of leadership for the school. In her first year as principal, students made astonishing breakthrough achievement gains — increasing the combined percentage of students at proficiency by more than 55% across math and ELA.

Todd's goal was to "get the school on the achievement track," and to do that she needed to understand what was hindering the school's success. In the spring before her entry, Todd began a fact-finding mission. She reviewed all of the school's data, learned about the history of the school, and observed teachers. Simultaneously, she began to build relationships with the staff, identifying teachers who were interested in changing the culture and asking them to work with her over the summer to develop the school's goals and plan for the year.

Once the school year began, she knew it was important to be visible to the kids, parents, and staff right off the bat, both to share her vision for the school as well as to send the message that she was there to stay. She greeted parents and students in the morning, visited the cafeteria, and most importantly, spent many hours in the classrooms. Her message to the staff was grounded in her belief that all children can succeed; she painted her vision, while outlining some of the structures that they would be putting into place to move toward it. Since many of the teachers had been in the school for years, Todd chose not to come in focused on the past or pointing fingers, but focused on changing expectations for the future. As she said, "You got to be clear that it's all about kids. If it's not what's best for kids... then it cannot continue." She helped teachers overcome their anxiety by letting her vision and ultimately her work speak for itself.

In classrooms, she asserted her role as an instructional leader. She conducted frequent walkthroughs and short observations, gave teachers immediate and concrete feedback, and gave staff explicit instruction on practices she wanted to be consistent throughout the building. Initially, the staff was overwhelmed; they were not used to feedback or having others in their rooms, but Todd's consistent message was, "We are here to coach, mentor, and support. If you don't feel like you're getting support, let me know." She worked to break down the barriers that the teachers had put in place when they were teaching in isolation.

Todd reflected that there were times when it was hard for the staff to feel like the school was improving and they were making a difference, particularly before the achievement data for the year came out. Nonetheless, her confidence in her plan and in her staff, along with her ability to build relationships, helped to turn Fort Worthington around. At the end of that first year, Fort Worthington's breakthrough gains showed the entire school community just how much they could accomplish when working together under a shared vision with a strong leader at the helm.

POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

" ACHIEVING A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN IS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE OF OUR GENERATION. THIS IS OUR MOON SHOT. "

Arne Duncan
US Secretary of Education

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In this era of monumental opportunity and urgency to transform America's schools, it is vitally important that our national conversation recognize the principal as a critical agent of school improvement. New Leaders for New Schools strongly advocates for the entire education field — the federal government, states, school systems, and philanthropic funders in particular — to adopt the three-pronged approach to defining *principal effectiveness* discussed in this paper and to align their human capital policies to this definition. Based on seven years of experience working with leaders who enter high-poverty, low-achieving urban public schools, we further recommend that a *highly effective* principal be distinguished by making breakthrough gains in student achievement and other student outcomes. The highly effective principal also makes accelerated progress in implementing the principal actions and school-wide practices that differentiate rapidly-improving schools.

Federal Government

As it embarks upon unprecedented investment in our nation's education system, we recognize that the federal government has a crucial role to play in providing guidance and incentives for states and school districts to implement New Leaders for New Schools' policy recommendations. We urge the federal government to focus in particular on the following priorities, beginning with the implementation of the Race to the Top and Title I School Improvement Grant initiatives:

Evidence–based learning cycles to drive ongoing improvement. Require and fund systems to capture, share, and learn from effective and ineffective practices and strategies implemented, including the identification of high-level school-wide practices and principal actions that differentiate rapidly-improving and turnaround schools. These learning cycles should be used to make tools, case studies, and professional development available to school leaders and to periodically revise existing state and school system policies and practices.

Defining and evaluating principal effectiveness. Require or encourage — and fund — states and school systems to define and evaluate principal effectiveness using the three pronged model described in this report: increasing student achievement, driving teacher effectiveness, and implementing the principal actions that differentiate breakthrough gaining schools.

Autonomies for turnaround school leaders. Require or encourage appropriate levels of autonomy for well-selected, well-prepared principals in exchange for accountability. While all principals require authority to manage school-level human capital in order to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement, these autonomies are especially critical for turnaround school leaders. School systems should provide turnaround principals with full authority over teacher hiring and dismissal, evaluation, professional development, and nomination to leadership team positions without any imposition of an arbitrary number of staff who must be replaced. Restart and charter models provide turnaround principals with the greatest flexibility in this area. Turnaround principals also benefit from flexibility over operational factors such as budgets, schedules, school support services, curriculum and instruction, and types and use of data.

Human capital pipelines for turnaround schools. Encourage and fund systems to identify and provide incentives for promising educators prepared to take on teaching and leadership roles in the schools of highest need. Ensure their consistent growth through professional development and a multi-faceted career ladder.

For more federal policy recommendations, please visit http://www.nlns.org/uef.jsp

Policy Recommendations: Principal Effectiveness

New Leaders strongly advocates for the following state and school system policies and funding priorities aligned to these definitions of effective and highly effective principals:

States

Revise principal standards. Use the definitions of effective and highly effective principals described in this paper to revise and streamline the principal standards at the state level, with a strong focus on student outcome gains as well as expectations for improving teacher effectiveness. An effective and highly effective principal is also one who clearly demonstrates the ability to implement the principal actions codified in the *UEF™* and other evidence-based frameworks for dramatic school improvement. The ideas described in this paper can help the state "sharpen the edge" of its existing standards to create expectations for principals to drive dramatic gains in student achievement.

Develop new guidelines for principal evaluation. Based on the revised standards, establish new guidelines for principal evaluation that clearly differentiate between effective and ineffective principals. The evaluation guidelines should be based on the recommended three-pronged approach above, which includes: improvements in student achievement and a small number of additional student outcomes, such as improved high school graduation, college readiness, matriculation and attendance rates; changes in the percentage of a school's teachers rated effective and highly effective through successful strategies in teacher hiring, evaluation, and professional development; and a streamlined assessment of the highest priority principal actions differentiating rapidly-improving schools from others.

Require principal preparation programs to learn from their results. Establish data systems that allow the state and principal certification programs to track the placement and retention rates of their graduates, as well as the student achievement outcomes of the schools they lead. Require programs to analyze this data annually and provide plans for improvement. Over time, identify principal preparation programs that have low performance and hold them accountable for key programmatic improvements in order to maintain licensure. Lastly, use the placement, retention, achievement, and teacher effectiveness data as part of a learning agenda to continuously improve state policies such as principal performance evaluations and alternative certification.

Expand the pipeline of effective principals through sensible alternative certification policies. Grant certification authority to institutions other than schools of education, such as innovative non-profits and school systems, whose principal preparation programs are aligned with the state standards for principal effectiveness and meet the requirements for tracking and learning from performance data as described above.

Study and disseminate learnings from breakthrough gaining schools. Create learning cycles to identify and study schools and classrooms that are making breakthrough gains in student achievement. Capture effective practices and examples of quality leadership and instruction from these schools and classrooms. Use the gathered information to share effective practices with other practitioners across the state, and engage those who consistently achieve breakthrough gains as leaders of professional learning and development for others. Use these tools to drive a continuous cycle of improvement by, over time, updating standards for teachers and principals.

Ensure higher percentages of effective principals through incentives for high-performers and by removing low-performers. Develop school systems' capacity to retain effective leaders by granting them funds and authority to provide financial and other incentives for high performers. Eliminate any state legislative or regulatory barriers to removing low-performers through efficient and fair evaluations aligned to the new definition of principal effectiveness.

School Systems: Districts and Charter Management Organizations

Establish rigorous selection criteria and processes for principals. Create consistent, transparent, and rigorous processes for interviewing and selecting principals aligned to the principal standards highlighted above for state reforms. Ensure that any principals selected possess the beliefs, orientations, and skills necessary to be strong instructional leaders and human capital managers focused on significant student learning improvements. Replace any selection processes based on relationships, tenure, or criteria other than the standards for principal effectiveness.

Revise principal evaluations to reflect the new definitions of effective and highly effective principals. Based on the revised definitions of effective and highly effective principals, establish new tools and processes for principal evaluation that clearly differentiate between effective and ineffective principals. These evaluations should be based on the recommended three-pronged approach above, which includes: improvements in student achievement and a small number of additional student outcomes, such as improved high school graduation, college readiness, matriculation and attendance rates; changes in the percentage of a school's teachers rated effective and highly effective through successful strategies in teacher hiring, evaluation, and professional development; and a streamlined assessment of the highest priority principal actions differentiating rapidly-improving schools from others.

Set high expectations for principal managers to evaluate and support principals. Ensure that principal managers are aligned with the new definitions of effective and highly effective principals. Select principal managers who demonstrate deep understanding of evidence-based frameworks for high-impact principal actions, generally through past experience as highly effective principals themselves. Set the expectation that they manage principals with a sense of urgency and accountability for student outcomes. Align the selection and evaluation criteria for principal managers based on these expectations.

Revise system policies to allow principals to serve as effective school–level human capital managers as described in The Urban Excellence Framework.[TM] Create rigorous teacher evaluation processes and expectations, and adjust existing policies to allow principals to provide strong incentives for retention of highly effective teachers and to remove persistently ineffective teachers using fair and efficient processes. Provide significant hiring authority for new teachers at the school level and avoid forced transfers. Also provide decision-making authority at the school level around budgets, scheduling, and use of professional development funds. Ensure alignment between these actions and expectations at the principal manager level.

Create a leadership pipeline. Identify high potential teacher leaders and provide career support, incentives for retention, and development in instructional leadership and data driven instruction. Present a compelling vision of the principalship to attract effective teachers and teacher leaders to develop their skills toward school leadership. Define the assistant principal role as a key developmental stage for the principalship, with the expectation that any assistant principal is on track to becoming a principal within three years. Hold principals accountable for designing assistant principal responsibilities so that they can develop key instructional leadership and human capital management experience, and create processes to review the progress and skills of assistant principals each year.

Ensure higher percentages of effective principals through professional development, incentives for high–performers, and removal of low–performers. Provide high-quality professional development experiences to all principals in the school system. Retain high performers by offering financial and other incentives while removing low-performers through efficient and fair evaluations aligned to the new definitions of principal effectiveness.

Philanthropic Funders

Invest in creating definitions of principal effectiveness and in systems with integrated and aligned approaches to principal effectiveness. Identify and invest in school systems that are constructing high-quality, aligned standards and evaluations for teachers, principals, and principal managers. Support these school systems in developing the necessary tools, structures, and trainings to bring those standards to life and ensure authentic and rigorous selection and evaluation of each role in the human capital chain. Provide investments and incentives for those systems that make significant changes in policy and practice around hiring, tenure, and compensation for each role aligned to the revised standards and to their effectiveness at increasing student achievement.

Fund leadership development as a key element of any system-wide reform. Principals and aligned leadership team members play crucial roles in the success of any integrated human capital strategy for the school system. They are the human capital managers at the school level, selecting high-potential teachers, creating the professional learning experiences at the school level that develop effectiveness, and evaluating teachers to ensure effectiveness on behalf of students — all while building strong school cultures focused on high expectations for every student. Invest purposefully in leadership development as part of any school system reform — at the same time encouraging systems to engage proven school leaders themselves in the planning and implementation process — since the selection and development of leaders with the beliefs and skills to serve as instructional leaders and human capital managers often requires more intensive programs than currently exist for the certification of principals.

Invest in the study of schools making breakthrough student achievement gains. Invest in states or education reform organizations that formally identify schools and classrooms making consistent breakthrough gains in student achievement and capture key learnings from these breakthrough gainers. Invest in systems for capturing and disseminating examples of effective practice from these schools and classrooms. Support pilots of new methods for distributing this effective practice information using a combination of technology and more traditional professional learning structures.

Fund school leadership programs with strong results that are committed to ongoing learning. Identify and invest in principal preparation programs that achieve positive results and that are willing and able to study their program results in terms of hiring, retention, student achievement impact, and increasing teacher effectiveness and that will make necessary program improvements based on the information generated. Hold all programs accountable for this data tracking and learning and for sharing their insights with the wider field. Support states in creating the necessary systems to tie results data to the individual preparation programs. Also support states in, over time, using data from individual preparation programs to inform policies in areas such as principal effectiveness definitions and alternative certification.

Invest in rigorous evaluations of systemic and program efforts to improve school leadership. Conduct rigorous formative and summative evaluations — or invest in others who conduct these evaluations — of systemic and program efforts to improve school leadership. Share insights broadly and use them to inform both future allocation of funds and policy efforts.

Policy Recommendations: Turnaround Schools

New Leaders for New Schools also advocates for school system policies that create the conditions for principals to turn around our nation's lowest performing schools and practices. States and philanthropic funders also have important contributions to make by providing expertise and financing to systems and by helping them to continuously learn about effective turnaround practices.

States

Encourage school systems to grant autonomies to turnaround principals. Through grants and formal guidance, create incentives for school systems to provide crucial autonomies to turnaround principals who, in their training, current, or past roles, have demonstrated the capacity to use autonomy effectively to improve student achievement. These autonomies include at a minimum full authority over human capital management, including teacher hiring, professional development, evaluation, leadership teams, and dismissal. Turnaround principals also benefit from flexibility over operational factors such as budgets, schedules, school support services, curriculum and instruction, and types and use of data.

Build coalitions of organizations and school systems focused on turnaround human capital. States can support school systems by building coalitions of like-minded organizations to provide what Mass Insight calls a "new paradigm of aligned, integrated support" for turnaround schools. At a minimum, these organizations must be focused on both the teacher and leader human capital needs of turnaround schools. They might also include organizations focused on the academic and social/emotional supports required for successful school turnarounds. States may also build coalitions of school systems with significant numbers of turnaround schools in order to facilitate the sharing of effective practices and the knowledge-building work described below.

Provide discretionary funds for school systems implementing proven turnaround strategies. Offer school systems the opportunity to compete for the additional financing they may need to implement the policies recommended below, including more expensive measures such as building turnaround human capital pipelines, providing wraparound school supports, and offering incentives for principals and teachers to serve in turnaround schools. By establishing a competitive grant process, states can ensure quality and coherence of systems' turnaround strategies.

Study and disseminate learnings from turnaround schools. Create learning cycles to identify and study turnaround schools that are achieving breakthrough gains in student achievement. Capture effective practices and examples of quality leadership and instruction from these schools, as well as key information about the system policies and structures that support them. Use the gathered information to share effective practices with other practitioners and systems across the state, and engage those who consistently achieve breakthrough gains as leaders of professional learning and development for others. Also use new insights to periodically revise state policies and practices related to turnaround schools.

School Systems: Districts and Charter Management Organizations

Revise policies to provide autonomies to turnaround principals. Grant crucial autonomies to turnaround principals who, in their training, current, or past roles, have demonstrated the capacity to use autonomy effectively to improve student achievement. These autonomies include at a minimum full authority over school-level human capital management, including teacher hiring, professional development, evaluation, leadership teams, and dismissal. Turnaround principals also benefit from flexibility over operational factors such as budgets, schedules, school support services, curriculum and instruction, and types and use of data.

Build a human capital pipeline for turnaround schools through a multi–faceted career ladder. Create a talent pipeline for turnaround schools by positioning them as the best places to work if you are a teacher or administrator who is interested in leadership and rapid professional growth. Identify effective teachers early in their careers and provide them with training and opportunities for advancement in turnaround schools that match their aspirations. Establish a variety of career paths for teachers who are interested in staying in the classroom and those who are interested in the principalship. Develop classroom teachers over time to take on positions as teacher mentors, instructional coaches, or instructional leadership team members. Those who wish to pursue the principalship can become senior leadership team members and assistant principals. It is from this pool that future turnaround principals and turnaround principal managers can be groomed. In all positions, offer additional financial incentives to effective teachers and leaders who serve in turnaround schools. Note that financial incentives are rarely adequate on their own, as research has shown that retention of effective teachers is closely linked with the opportunity to work with an aligned and effective principal.[xxx] But taken as a whole, this long-term strategy provides for effective teachers and leaders within individual turnaround schools and across the system's entire turnaround portfolio.

Select turnaround principals who have demonstrated the capacity to create whole–school change. Turnaround principals require unique beliefs, orientations, and skills. Select for those who, in their training, current, or past roles, have demonstrated the following: an unwavering belief in the potential of every student to succeed academically; the instructional expertise to lead a whole staff; the ability to effectively manage others; the skill and orientation to use student learning data to drive breakthrough gains; and the operational skills to manage the school's day-to-day in such a way that allows the principal to maintain a focus on improving instruction and building school culture. Ensure that all turnaround principals demonstrate a strong interest in and ability to implement the high-level principal actions and school-wide practices known to spur breakthrough results in challenging schools. Also ensure that they are prepared to take the difficult actions necessary to build a staff that are aligned to these goals.

Partner effectively with teachers unions to revise school system turnaround policies. Re-negotiate teachers union contracts to allow principals in turnaround schools to serve as effective human capital managers as described above. Ensure that there are efficient and fair systems for dismissal of chronically underperforming teachers. Also ensure fair compensation for the additional work teachers in turnaround schools may perform as described in the summer planning and leadership team recommendations below.

Hire turnaround principals as early as possible. Hire turnaround principals early to afford them greater time to plan and to meet with existing staff. Placement prior to the end of the school year preceding their formal adoption of the role can be enormously beneficial because it also provides the opportunity to observe staff, students, and the outgoing leadership in action. The new principal can then build a much more complete picture of the school's current state and its assets in advance of designing an improvement plan.

Require turnaround school staff to spend more time planning and developing over the summer. In addition to principals and assistant principals who work year-round, require the full school staff to spend at least one month in planning and professional development during the summer of the first year, and at least two weeks for the next four summers with additional requirements for leadership team members at the discretion of the principal.

Provide turnaround principals with funds to compensate an expanded group of principal–selected leadership team members. In turnaround schools, leadership team members provide crucial instructional support to other teachers and drive the overall learning program of the school, in addition to providing some operational support to the principal. This work is particularly important in larger schools where the principal has less time to coach each individual staff member. Thus we believe it is imperative that school systems provide turnaround principals with the flexibility to create larger leadership teams than might be needed in other schools and to select the candidates best suited for each role. Furthermore, leadership team members do their work in addition to teaching full-time, and therefore require additional compensation. School systems must provide principals with the monies to fully fund a leadership team of appropriate size. Given that service on the leadership team is also an important step for developing the skills necessary to become an assistant principal or principal in a turnaround school, these funds represent a valuable investment for the long-term system strategy to transform chronically underperforming schools.

Ensure aligned principal managers for turnaround schools. Hire principal managers who can successfully support and evaluate turnaround principals against an evidence-based framework for effective turnaround principal actions. These managers must fully understand the difficult process of school change and the sometimes drastic measures required for students to make breakthrough learning gains. They must also believe deeply in the possibility of school turnaround and manage with a sense of urgency and accountability for student outcomes. Candidates can best demonstrate these competencies by having served as highly effective turnaround principals themselves. It is unlikely that most school systems will have a large pool of principal manager candidates with this experience and expertise; therefore, one strategy for ensuring aligned principal managers can be to create "clusters" of turnaround schools that may not be geographically close but nonetheless face similar challenges. The aligned principal manager can then focus exclusively on supporting turnarounds. Clusters may also help systems to facilitate the sharing of effective practices between turnaround principals and teachers, adding an additional layer of support for staff development.

Philanthropic Funders

Invest in capacity–building efforts of turnaround schools and school systems. Provide startup funds and outside expertise to states, systems, and schools to help them implement the above recommendations. Few systems or states are likely to have the funds or expertise to develop on their own a turnaround human capital pipeline, robust learning cycles, or the full range of wraparound supports for turnaround schools, and they also may need support in establishing the critical school-level autonomies for turnaround schools

Fund ongoing implementation for turnaround schools and school systems. After initial implementation, provide ongoing funds to support the continuing work of human capital development and hiring incentives, learning and policy adjustment, and supports such as expanded leadership teams and extended summer planning time.

Invest in the study of turnaround schools making breakthrough student achievement gains. Invest in states or education reform organizations that formally identify turnaround schools making consistent breakthrough gains in student achievement and capture key learnings from these breakthrough gainers. Invest in systems for capturing and disseminating examples of effective practices, including studies of the system policies and practices that support these schools. Support pilots of new methods for distributing this effective practice information using a combination of technology and more traditional professional learning structures.

Invest in efforts to provide effective principals and leadership teams for turnarounds. Invest in states, school systems, and organizations that select, develop, and support effective principals and leadership teams for turnaround schools. Require that they collect performance data and conduct ongoing learning and program improvement processes.

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.

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.nlns.org/uef.jsp.

xi 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.

xii 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.

xiii Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006).

xiv Jordan, H., Mendro, R., & Weerasinghe, D. (1997). The Effects of Teachers on Longitudinal Student Achievement. Paper presented at the CREATE annual meeting. As cited in Haycock, Kati (2009). Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Between Groups: Lessons from Schools and Districts on the Performance Frontier, Principals Summer Institute, Southbury, CT.

xv Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2008). Estimating teacher impacts on student achievement: An experimental evaluation. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

xvi Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J. & Keeling, D. (2009). The Widget Effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness. Brooklyn, NY: The New Teacher Project.

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xix Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005).

xx Berends, M., Kirby, S. N., Naftel, S., & McKelvey, C. (2001), Duke, D. (2004).

xxi 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.

xxii Annual internal project reports on progress of the RAND Corporation's longitudinal evaluation of the New Leaders for New Schools program.

xxiii Based on internal analyses of the most recent publicly available graduation data from 2008 for New Leaders in their second year or beyond.

xxiv Exploratory analysis using publicly available achievement data from schools led by first-year New Leaders principals across all our districts from 2007-2009.

xxv Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J. & Keeling, D. (2009).

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RENAISSANCE
AT DODGE

New Leaders *for* New Schools

APPENDIX

RENAISSANCE AT DODGE

A Case Study

This 2007 case study tells how a restructured, district elementary school achieved significant gains in student proficiency by focusing on order, the hiring and development of effective teachers, and standards-based instruction.

Dodge Renaissance Academy

City: Chicago

Principal: Jarvis Sanford

Principal Started: 2004

Tenure: 3 Years

NL Cohort: 2

Grades: PreK-8

Enrollment: 450

Poverty Rate: 95 percent

School type: Contract—district school with alternative governance.
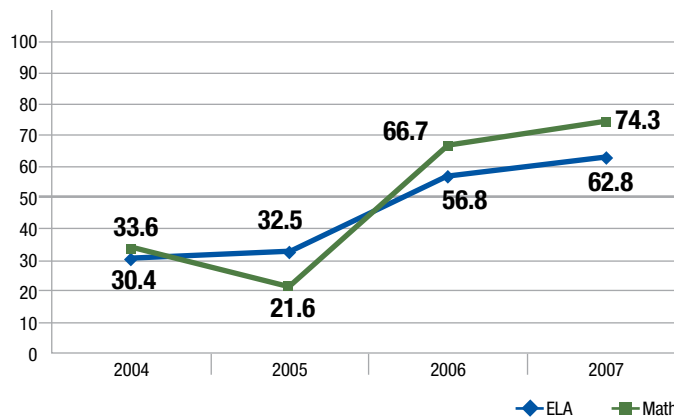
Visitors to the preK-8 Dodge Renaissance Academy in Chicago often remark about the school's morning ritual. A few minutes before 9 a.m. each day, New Leaders principal Jarvis Sanford walks onto the school's playground and holds up one hand. Teachers on duty outside follow suit. At the signal, basketballs and jump ropes are put aside, and students fall in line at designated spots behind their teachers. Within about two minutes, everyone is in place, after which classes are sent off to their rooms in columns. While other schools attempt a similar procedure, at Dodge it takes place with barely a word spoken by adults or children, except for Sanford saying, "Good morning everybody," before sending them off. Carried out in the same manner every morning of the year, the exercise is aimed at getting students settled down and in learning mode as quickly as possible. Says Sarah Zablotny, a math teacher at the school: "As a teacher, it means the first 10 minutes of class are productive."

Not long ago, Dodge was a very different place. In 2002, it became one of three buildings in the Chicago Public Schools that district CEO Arne Duncan closed for low performance, a move that sparked protest by union leaders and some community members. As an early part of what Chicago Mayor Richard Daley would call the Renaissance 2010 initiative, Dodge and one of the other schools would get new staff and new governance structures. (The third was not reopened due to declining enrollment.) But even such drastic measures did not ensure immediate success, and Dodge went through significant leadership turnover after it opened its doors again in fall 2003. By most accounts, the school got on track in 2004, with the arrival of Principal Sanford. Two years later, Dodge reportedly posted the

45 APPENDIX: RENAISSANCE AT DODGE

greatest gains of any elementary school in Chicago on the state's student assessments, a major achievement for a school where almost all of the students are from low-income families.[1]

Asked how he thinks his school accomplished such improvement, Sanford cites three levers: order, the hiring and development of talented teachers, and standards-based instruction. Dodge is explicit about its expectations for behavior, and relentless in consistently holding students to them. In recruiting teachers, the principal looks far and wide, and he scrutinizes candidates closely to find the right fit. He's also willing to encourage staff members who aren't performing exceptionally to move on. Meanwhile, professional collaboration is a way of life at Dodge, where the weekly schedule provides multiple opportunities for teachers to learn and problem solve with each other—opportunities that staff have used to greatly hone their literacy and math instruction. Together, these efforts are aimed at fostering an environment that sends a clear message that Dodge is a place for learning—both for students and adults. "This doesn't just happen," says Sanford of that environment. "It's created."

Background

Sitting in Chicago's west side neighborhood of East Garfield Park, Dodge serves about 450 students. All but 2 percent are African American. At the time that CEO Duncan targeted the school for closure in the 2001-02 school year, three quarters of its students were scoring below national norms in math on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; on the reading ITBS, about 85 percent were not scoring at national norms.[2] On both, the school's results were well below district averages. Even still, the decision to overhaul the school was met with stiff resistance. The Chicago Teachers Union, which complained it hadn't been given advance warning of the action, protested the decision before the district's school board and sought unsuccessfully to win a court injunction to stop the closure of Dodge and the two other schools slated for closure.[3]

Under the district's plan, Dodge would reopen after one year.[4] Although in the same building, the school would have a completely new staff and new management. Traditional CPS schools are individually governed by their own committees of parents and community members, called local school councils, who hire and can fire the principal. Instead, the new Dodge would be governed by an outside group that contracted with the district. That group would be the Academy for Urban School Leadership, a local nonprofit founded in 2001 to provide an alternative preparation program for teachers, in which candidates undergo year-long residencies in classrooms with master educators.[5] (Jennifer Henry, New Leaders Cohort 1, served as AUSL's first executive director.) In essence, the board of AUSL then replaced the local school council at Dodge. At the same time, Dodge became the second Chicago school to serve as a training site for AUSL candidates.

The school's rebirth did not get off to a smooth start. Its first principal left within a few months after the school reopened, after which the assistant principal was given the job. Then that administrator departed at the end of the first school year. Anxious to get the school on the right path, the AUSL board asked Jarvis Sanford to take over in the summer of 2004. Sanford had by then spent a year as principal of another CPS school, where he had hired a number of graduates of the AUSL program. As he recalls, the stakes were high for everyone in the Dodge community when he came on board. District leaders had closed the school with the promise that it would improve. The Academy for Urban School Leadership needed to show that it could be a good steward of the school. And parents were desperate for stability after seeing their school first shut down for a year, and then wind up with three principals by the beginning of its second year after reopening. "There was a big spotlight on this school to do well, and it wasn't," says Sanford.

A native Alabaman who grew up in Detroit, Sanford brought with him a mix of experiences in business, higher education, and K-12 education. He started out in real estate, earned an M.B.A. from Northern Illinois University, and worked for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he ran student residential-life programs and led training for the office of affirmative action. Having enjoyed working with young people, he went on to earn a doctorate in curriculum and

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1 Tracy Dell Angela, "City grade schools shine on tests," Chicago Tribune, March 6, 2007

2 Performance and data throughout this case are from Dodge's "School Progress Report" from the CPS Dept. of Research & Evaluation, the school's "Illinois School Report Card," and other state and district documents. Note: Scores for 2002, which came after Duncan announced his plans for Dodge did show the school having boosted the percent of its students scoring at or above national norms that year, by about 10 percentage points in reading and about 1.5 percentage points in math.

3 Grant Pick, "Duncan puts new emphasis on 'business of education," Catalyst Chicago, June 2003.

4 Michelle Galley, "Chicago to Close Three Failing Schools," Education Week, April 24, 2002; Beatriz Cholo and Lori Olszewski, "On the Road to Reform; Ailing schools aim for 'renaissance; Shut 2 years ago, they're rebounding," Chicago Tribune, June 20, 2004.

5 "Teacher prep program eases path to certification for career changers," Catalyst Chicago, March 2003.

instruction from Northern Illinois and completed an alternative teacher certification program. He first taught in a Chicago suburb, then moved to CPS, where he taught the 5th, 7th and 8th grades. He applied for, and was accepted into the second cohort of the New Leaders for New Schools training program after a friend showed him a newspaper article about it.

For his New Leaders residency, he was assigned to the Chicago's Burnham/Anthony elementary school, which consists of four separate buildings at different sites, but all under one administrator. Put in charge of the building for grades 3-5, Sanford found himself functioning essentially as a principal that year, hiring many teachers and organizing professional development for his staff. Although a challenging initiation at time, the experience—and the level of responsibility he had—showed him what matters most in moving a school toward higher performance, he said. "What I learned is it's all about human relationships, about building the capacity of people, and inspiring them, and wanting them to do a good job that creates a climate that will take a school to another level," he says. He adds: "If you can't inspire people to want to work, it's all for naught." From Burnham/Anthony, Sanford was hired as principal at Wendall Smith Elementary, where he spent a year before coming to Dodge.

Dodge enjoys a number of advantages due to its unusual status within CPS. Sanford says that reporting to AUSL instead of to a local school council means he doesn't have to expend as much energy educating his employers on the rationale for his school improvement strategies. It also minimizes the chances that he'll have to contend with the kind of local politics than can plague some LSCs. Meanwhile, AUSL and its backers have the clout to help him when he needs outside support. As a teacher training site for the academy, Dodge also gets additional money for professional development for its staff. And it means Dodge has 16 extra people in its classrooms, in the form of its residents; though still teachers in training, they can give added attention to students and fill in as substitutes when regular teachers are in professional development. The district also gave the school building some upgrades when it became part of the Renaissance program. And Dodge is part of a district initiative that gives low-performing schools additional money to hold Saturday classes during the winter, leading up to spring state testing.

Some observers question whether such advantages explain the bulk of Dodge's improvement of late. Others point to the recent gentrification of some of the surrounding neighborhood, and claim that the changing demographics are the cause. But while the closing of Dodge for a year did displace students—some of whom chose not to return, and whose spots were then filled by others—95 percent of those at the school now are from families whose incomes are low enough to qualify them for subsidized lunches. And although the school has clearly benefited from its relationship with AUSL and the district's Renaissance initiative, the fact that the school's first year after its reopening was so rocky suggests that those factors alone were not sufficient to turn things around. (Moreover, the other Chicago school that was closed and reopened at the same time as Dodge faired poorly just as Dodge began to take off.) Sanford and his team contend that what made the difference at Dodge were a series of thoughtful, strategic decisions that changed the school's culture.

Order

Maintaining order was one of the two top objectives that Sanford set for his leadership team when he arrived in July of 2004. (The other was creating high-quality professional development for teachers.) For him, order is a means to an end, and that end is student learning. As he says: "With that, you get to teach more." Before school began his first year at Dodge, he made sure the school spelled out its expectations for student behavior, down to how the classes should walk in lines in the hallways. Clear consequences for infractions also were laid out. It took about a week for students to learn the morning line-up ritual. Lou Bradley, the school's literacy coach and a member of his core leadership team, said that some staff at first didn't agree with all the regimentation, but that Sanford made his case. Too many schools, he says, waste instructional time getting kids back in order. Plus, he says, a structured environment sends the message to kids that they're at school to learn.

While Sanford says that clear procedures and policies are essential for creating order, he also says those are only effective if followed with absolutely consistency. He gives an example from the end of the past school year, when a number of students were not showing up in their uniforms: Whereas other schools might have shrugged off the behavior during the last days of school, Sanford required the students to sit in the cafeteria until school started (instead of playing outside), after which he took them to the main office and called their parents. "If I were to let them slide by, then you'd have a whole school who'd say 'he's not serious.' " The principal believes his morning line-up is so orderly because it takes place the same way every day throughout the year, with him leading it. Were he to let others stand in for him frequently, he thinks the order would be lost.

Modeling is another key ingredient to Dodge's well-disciplined environment. Sanford has instituted a dress code for teachers. (No jeans, for instance.) When he consistently enforces expectations for student behavior, he's sending a message to staff members that they should do the same, he says. He also does so in a respectful manner; he usually says "thank you so much," when students comply with his orders. He often fills in as a substitute teacher, making the point that people are expected to pitch in however they can. "If I have to sweep I sweep; if I have to serve lunch I serve lunch," he says. "And so I expect you to be invested enough to go the extra mile." At Dodge, then, teachers say they now don't hesitate to address problems involving students other than their own. Says Zablotny, the math teacher: "If kids are talking in the hallway, that affects my class, too… You have to buy into that culture."

Recruitment and development of talented teachers

Sanford sees many principals who've come up through the ranks in K-12 education as having the view that teachers either know what to do or they don't. His own belief, shaped by his work outside the field, is that a leader should hire smart people who love professional development, give them lots of opportunities to grow, and then do everything possible to support their efforts. When he can, he tries to hire people who, like himself, have experience in both education and other fields. "So much of this is just identifying really good talent, and empowering them to do whatever it takes," he says. "And I think the job of the principal is to remove the obstacles to success." He can cite numerous times when he's let teachers run with an idea for improving instruction. Too often, he says, such teachers feel stifled in schools. "I'm not intimidated by smart people," he says. Evidence that he tries to make teachers feel supported is seen in how he rearranged his budget to provide them all with laptop computers.

At the same time, he holds his staff to a high standard. Sanford tells prospective hires Dodge isn't a good place for teachers looking to get their work done between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. He expects them to spend extra time collaborating with their colleagues and serving students after school, such as by tutoring or leading sports. He wasn't impressed with many of the teachers he inherited when he took over Dodge in 2004. Three years later, only a handful of the teachers on staff when he arrived remain. He used a variety of methods to make the changes. Under a process known as "clicking," Chicago principals can easily remove nontenured teachers at the end of the school year. He also "counseled out" some more veteran teachers. But many teachers opted on their own to go elsewhere after seeing his expectations. "I create an environment where teachers select out," he says.

To fill vacancies, Dodge casts a wide net. Sanford said he hasn't found job fairs to be especially fruitful. Instead, he has relied to a great extent on the RISE Network, the San Francisco-based nonprofit that matches teachers wanting to serve at-risk students with urban schools that have supportive leadership. He tries to zero in on educators from districts that he believes have done a good job developing their teachers, like Atlanta and New York City. (He hasn't considered Chicago in that category.) Many recruits he learns about through word of mouth, and local ones he'll observe in their schools. Over time, more teachers from other schools have sought him out. He has candidates come to Dodge to teach a demo lesson to students while he and three or four staff members look on; after the lessons, they interview the potential hires on their demonstrations and on their teaching craft in general. "I'll do anything to get a good teacher," says the principal.

Dodge teachers spend considerable time on professional development. Elsewhere in Chicago, teachers get a minimum allotment of a 50-minute prep period three or four times a week, and those prep periods aren't always scheduled to let teachers at the same grade levels plan together. At Dodge, teachers at each grade level have common prep periods five days a week. As a training site for the Academy for Urban School Leadership, Dodge also has two weekly 90-minute training sessions after school, for which teachers get a 20 percent salary bump. His second year at Dodge, Sanford also reworked the schedule to work in weekly meetings during the school day for each teaching cluster (those at grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8.) He says he did so without adding to the budget; instead, many of his ancillary staff members made concessions, such as the gym teacher who agreed to teach two classes at the same time. Meanwhile, he arranges for groups of teachers to periodically visit other classrooms in the school. In the 2006-7 school year Dodge also began video-taping its teachers, providing another chance for them to see each other in action. Says Bradley: "We got the chance to not just go wide, but also deep with what we did. Often that's a problem with PD: You touch on the surface, and you're not able to work out the kinks."

Along with the added time, leaders at Dodge have worked to cultivate a culture that puts a high premium on professional development and collaboration. Sanford sits alongside his teachers in their training, both so he knows what to look for when he visits their classrooms—which he does daily—and to make it clear that he sees such training as critically important. At the same time, professional development has evolved at Dodge. At first, it was aimed at infusing common understandings about skills—like how to teach reading—across the school. But over time, school leaders say it has become more teacher-driven and more tailored to teachers' individual needs. Together, these opportunities have resulted in a school in which many say that teachers now take the initiative for helping each other succeed. Said Brenda Adams, a first year teacher who came to the profession following a career in television production: "It's almost like they are of the mind that they don't think they can be successful if I'm not."

Standards-based instruction: literacy

Sanford is a firm believer in balanced literacy, the instructional approach that seeks to develop students' abilities to make their own meaning from text along with their more mechanical skills, like deciphering words. When instruction focuses too much on the latter—usually with basal reading books with scripted exercises—he thinks that neither teachers nor students are adequately challenged. "Basals make teachers lazy," he contends. "If you keep with a basal, teachers will just say 'It's day 100, turn to page 101,' and they won't learn how to improve their craft. What you need is to learn your students, learn your craft, and then combine them to meet their needs." But he also recognizes that balanced literacy is difficult to master. Without a script to follow, teachers must be nimble with their students and create their own lessons, albeit based on a set of general models.

Fortunately, upon coming to Dodge the principal was immediately able to bring on two instructional leaders well steeped in the approach. One was his literacy coach, Lou Bradley, a veteran Chicago educator who had trained him when he was a fifth-grade teacher and she was a professional developer for the Chicago Area Writing Project. The other was Terrence Carter, a former business executive who had become a New Jersey public school teacher and who came to work under Sanford at Dodge as a resident in Cohort 4 of the New Leaders for New Schools principal preparation program. In previous jobs, Bradley and Carter each had learned balanced literacy from some of the most preeminent experts in the field. The two also complimented each other well: Carter had taught in the early grades, while Bradley's experience was more at the middle school level.

As a framework for organizing their efforts they choose the "Guiding Readers" texts by Irene Fountas & Gay Pinnell. The books outline the key balanced literacy strategies the school would use with students, the focus of which are workshops that include daily hour-long blocks with mini-lessons, followed by the application of strategies by students in small-group reading, independent reading, and large group discussions. (At Dodge, teacher-created posters of those strategies now cover the walls.) The workshops also entail half-hour blocks for developing word study skills, like how to form plurals. With Carter and Bradley leading the training, Dodge used its twice-weekly afterschool professional development periods that first year to "synchronize" the school's teachers so they were using the same methods, says Bradley. (They decided to concentrate on Readers' Workshop their first year, leaving the Writers' Workshop components to the following year.) "It was: here's the framework, these are the elements of the framework, this is the pedagogy, this is the research behind it," she says. Merely adopting those elements is a considerable undertaking, she adds. Not only must teachers learn to assess and address each student's reading level so they can group them homogenously for guided reading work, but they also must teach students how to gauge their own abilities so they can pick appropriate texts for independent reading. That also means teachers need the materials and know-how to create appropriate classroom libraries.

Signs that the literacy strategy was working came at the end of Sanford's first year, when the portion of Dodge students scoring above national norms on the ITBS reading test jumped to 41.6 percent, from 31.6 percent the previous year. But school leaders knew they still had to do better, and they thought they saw a key weakness in Dodge's scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, which had been given greater weight for accountability purposes in Chicago starting in spring of 2005. That year, just 27.5 percent of Dodge's third graders had met or exceeded state standards in reading, as had 23.5 percent of fifth graders. More than the ITBS, the state test emphasized extended response questions that asked students to read passages and then write about conclusions drawn from them. Dodge students weren't doing well on those items. Recalls Bradley: "I'd felt that if we taught reading really well, our kids would write extended responses well, and that was not the case the first year."

So in its second year after Sanford arrived, Dodge devoted much of its professional development time to training on how to teach students to write good extended responses. That meant going beyond the instructional models in the literacy framework laid out the previous year, and having teachers teach students some highly explicit strategies for discerning what a question was asking, and for constructing a convincing and articulate response. Bradley admits some initial discomfort at the formulaic nature of the instruction. She didn't want to fall into the trap of teaching to the test, she says. She adds that many students themselves were initially resistant, and teachers had to work hard to make the practice engaging. But she also saw that the skills they were teaching were important for students to learn. And in spring 2006, Dodge saw clear evidence that its students were learning them. The percentage of its third graders meeting or exceeding state standards on the ISAT that year jumped to 46.8, from 27.5; at the fifth grade level, it rose to 37.5, from 23.5.[6] "I don't regret doing that," says Bradley of the school's work on extended response. "If you want to be a good teacher, the kids become your curriculum, and you follow their lead."

Standards-based instruction: math

With so much on the school's plate during Sanford's first year, improving math instruction at Dodge didn't get a high priority early on. Dodge did adopt schoolwide textbooks in math, but the subject wasn't a major focus of professional development. "We started out just working on the routines, order, and creating systems, and coupled that with the reading," says the principal. "There's only so much time." Sanford faced another challenge in trying to improve math: When he arrived, all classrooms at Dodge were self-contained. That meant that even at the higher grade levels students had the same teacher teaching them all subjects, regardless of whether that teacher had a particular strength in them. Transitioning to a more departmentalized structure in the middle and upper grades has been a multi-year process, and has required the hiring of teachers with expertise in subjects other than literacy. Not surprisingly, Dodge actually experienced a dip in math scores on the ITBS in the first year after Sanford arrived—from 27.1 percent of students scoring above national norms in 2004 to 23.9 percent in 2005.

Going into his second year at Dodge, Sanford hired someone who would do much to change that: Sarah Zablotny. An English major as an undergrad at the University of Chicago, she had wanted to be a magazine journalist, working briefly at her college's alumni publication. Her entree to teaching was the Academy for Urban School Leadership, which she joined for the program's inaugural year. She did her residency at AUSL's first training site, the Chicago Academy, and taught two years at another Chicago school before coming to Dodge. Despite her interest in writing and literature, she'd always been comfortable with math. She took college-level math in middle and high school, later tutored students in math over the summer, and earned a math teaching endorsement after completing her AUSL training. She knows many teachers don't feel the same way about the subject, and so few teach concepts well. "They get bogged down in getting the right answer," she says, adding the result can be students that feel they're either good or bad at it. When she first started teaching the subject to eighth graders at Dodge, she says, "They hated math."

Zablotny was at Dodge just a few months when she saw an opportunity for teachers there to improve their math instruction. During one of the periodic classroom walkthroughs the school arranges for teachers, she and another math teacher, Chris Bruggeman, noticed how Dodge teachers were scoring answers to math problems that asked for extended responses. While the state of Illinois has a rubric for assessing answers to such problems, the two saw that at Dodge it wasn't being used consistently or correctly. Knowing that the newly emphasized ISAT tested students not just on computation, but also on their ability to explain their mathematical reasoning in writing, Zablotny and her colleague volunteered to lead workshops on teaching how to do extended responses in math. They had teachers work through such problems themselves, coming up with strategies for students to use in analyzing the questions and solving them. In cluster meetings they brought in actual student responses to score together using the state's rubric. The work appeared to pay off: The performance of Dodge students skyrocketed on the spring 2006 ISAT in math.[7] At the third grade level, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards jumped from 19.5 to 72.3; at the fifth grade, it rose from 30 to 62.5.[8] Zablotny says the episode also demonstrates her principal's leadership style. "Dr. Sanford is good at listening to teachers, and when a couple of us raised a red flag about this, he made it a priority."

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6 Comparing ISAT scores from 2005 to 2006 is difficult, as Illinois went from testing grades 3, 5, & 8 in 2005 to testing grades 3-8 the following year, plus the state made other changes in its assessments at the same time. In addition, CPS as a whole saw significant gains that year. However, Dodge's were far greater.

7 Grade level proficiency rates discussed here may not match results in the chart on the first page of this case, as the data in the chart represent aggregate numbers, not just one grade.

8 Ibid.

But the mastery of extended responses was just the beginning. At the end of Zablotny's first year at Dodge, she helped begin to tackle a lack of alignment between what teachers were teaching and what students needed to learn at each level. "They didn't have a really strong sense of, 'this is a third grade concept, or this is a fourth grade concept,' " she says. So the school went about unpacking the state's math standards. For the last 10 weeks of that school year, one teacher from each grade at Dodge was released from classes one day a week so they could review the standards together and come up with common definitions of the knowledge, understanding, and reasoning that students would need to acquire to master them. In doing so, she says, teachers also could see how to adjust their instructional vocabulary to better match the state's assessments—for instance, using "substitute," instead of "plug in." The next step was to create assessments teachers could use throughout the year to gauge student progress. A group of teachers, including Zablotny, spent much of that summer creating enough items for 20 to 30 short assessments that teachers at each grade level could give to students approximately every two weeks throughout the next year.

As they soon realized, even that work wasn't enough. In the fall of 2006, by which time Zablotny had become math coordinator at Dodge, teachers started using the assessments they created and found their students weren't doing well. The problem, she says, was that there was no guarantee that students had been taught all of the concepts on each of the assessments by the time they were tested. "We kind of had to take a step back and ask what we were teaching when," she says. At the time, teachers were following the sequence of instruction in the textbook series that the school had adopted, which was among a few endorsed by the Chicago district. Zablotny then led teachers in the mapping of those textbooks to the state standards, and discovered significant mismatches. In response, teachers decided that in fall 2007 that they would use a different math series, Everyday Math, which also was recommended by the district, but was better aligned with state expectations. They also mapped out pacing guides showing what teachers at each level should cover in each two-week period; they left enough flexibility so they could then fill in their own daily schedules. In spring 2007, Zablotny also led the revision of the school's interim assessment items, based on feedback from teachers. Dodge will be using the revised assessments and the new pacing guides in the 2007-08 school year, so any effect they might have on the school's test results won't show up until that spring. But in the meantime, preliminary results from spring 2007 suggest that the early work of unpacking the standards and piloting the interim assessments already has had a positive impact.

Looking ahead

Despite his school's impressive gains, Sanford knows that Dodge has lots of work to do before it can ensure that all of its students are proficient. In literacy and math, he says, teachers have a good handle on what students need to learn and how to teach it. What's still needed, he says, are effective interventions for children who are still struggling. "We're not as adept at being able to follow up and give them the assistance they need," he says. "Once a teacher has taught a concept and a student has not mastered it, then what?" One strategy he plans for 2007-08 is to use a teacher's aide who is a math major to work with struggling students individually and in small groups. After focusing its professional development on literacy and math for the past three years, he says it's time to strengthen instruction in science and social studies. He also has plans to expand efforts he began in the 2006-07 school year to teach parents how to be supportive of their children's learning. But while recognizing that Dodge isn't yet where it needs to be, Sanford says it's clearly in a different place than it was. "Dodge is in transition from going from good to great," says Sanford. "We've had a hugely successful run at helping children understand and appreciate what school is all about as a neighborhood school."

New Leaders for New Schools

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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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