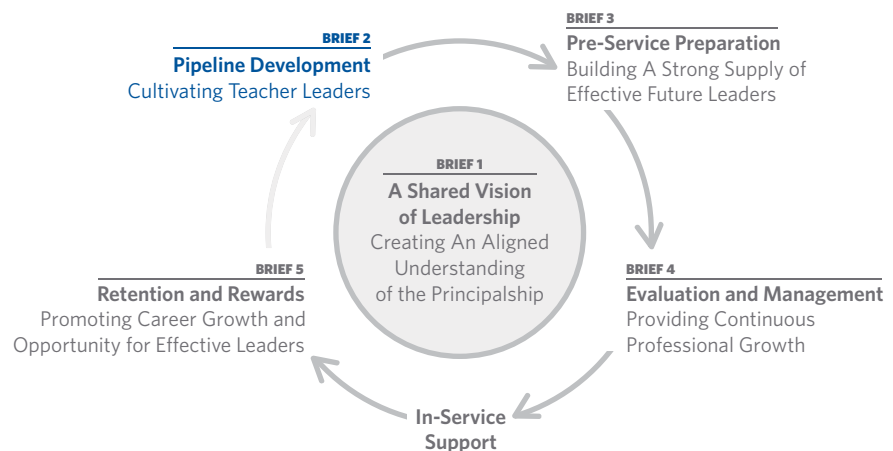


PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT: CULTIVATING TEACHER LEADERS

Accounting for a quarter of a school's impact on student achievement, principals are the leverage point for education reform and the primary drivers of school improvement. School leaders have a greater influence on all students than teachers and are the best long-term investment in effective teaching at scale.



THE CHALLENGE: A WEAK PIPELINE

Like all professionals, teachers, assistant principals, and principals want opportunities to grow over the course of their careers. Successful educators have job opportunities beyond the school, and many leave to pursue other careers within and outside the education sector. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, 25 years ago the mode of teacher experience was 15 years; by 2007, that number had dropped to only one year of experience.¹ In a study of teachers who left the field of education, 58 percent reported their new profession offered more opportunities for advancement.² But this doesn't have to be the case. More than 75 percent of highly effective teachers indicated that they would have stayed at their schools if their main reasons for leaving had been addressed.³ Many of the strategies to increase teacher retention are practices driven by principals—including providing feedback and development, offering recognition, and providing new responsibilities or advancement opportunities, such as staying in the classroom part-time while taking on additional leadership responsibilities.⁴

Developing a pipeline of future leaders through teacher leadership and assistant principal roles will help address a number of challenges at the local level. It gives potential future leaders hands-on practice with adult leadership. It creates career pathways for teachers to explore expanding their reach while remaining in the classroom. And it helps schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) plan for future leadership needs. Despite the number of credentialed administrators, states and LEAs are finding it difficult to recruit the school leaders we need, especially in our highest-need schools. This challenge is driven in part by the limitations of current preparation programs, many of which do not provide authentic residency experiences to prospective leaders. Developing a leadership pipeline will help mitigate those challenges by offering effective teachers the opportunity to develop leadership skills and put them into practice before assuming a principalship.

Finally, principals can't do it alone. Like others in education, principals are being asked to do more with less. Our most effective principals recognize that to be successful in increasing student achievement, they need to cultivate the leadership talent of their staffs.⁵ New Leaders has found that great principals in our highest-performing schools build leadership teams and delegate responsibilities in order to manage the school effectively, to engage teachers in decision-making, and to develop future school leaders.⁶

THE SOLUTION: AN ONRAMP TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP

In order to create a robust pipeline of effective future principals, to give teachers opportunities to expand their reach and practice adult leadership, and to provide principals with strong leadership teams to support their work, federal policymakers should:

- Foster the role of the teacher leader to develop talent already in the system; and
- Expand the pipeline to bring new talent into the system.

FOSTER THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER LEADER TO DEVELOP TALENT ALREADY IN THE SYSTEM

1 | Remove barriers to becoming teacher leaders. Teacher leader roles allow teachers to practice adult leadership skills while providing critical support to principals. Effective teachers can expand their reach by mentoring other teachers. They can also help a principal execute her instructional leadership duties by observing peers or facilitating team meetings.

Vehicle:

- Initiate a **rulemaking** process to set the eligibility criteria for grant competitions such that eligible entities must remove barriers to the development of teacher leaders. These barriers could include state or local laws for collectively bargained agreements that restrict certain leadership responsibilities teachers can take on without receiving additional levels of licensure.

2 | Encourage clear and easy-to-navigate career paths. To help teachers envision a long-term role for themselves in education, states and LEAs need to create career pathways that keep great teachers in the classroom while simultaneously expanding their reach as master teachers, coaches, or teacher leaders. These pathways will also allow LEAs to build their own pipelines of future principals.

Vehicles:

- **Invest** in programs that develop the teacher leader and assistant principal roles and provide career ladders and other opportunities for effective educators to practice adult leadership skills and serve on leadership teams that support their principals.
- **Invest** in pathways for effective educators (as determined by robust educator evaluation systems that accurately and consistently differentiate educator performance based on a pattern of effectiveness over time) that include differentiated compensation for both demonstrated effectiveness on the job and increased responsibilities.
- **Convene** states and LEAs to collaborate and share best practices on incentives and career pathways for great teachers.

There are a number of vehicles federal policymakers can use to create or encourage effective leadership policies. Throughout this series we will describe an ideal policy and then suggest potential vehicles policymakers could use to pursue that policy.

Authorizing Statute

The legislative branch can amend current laws—such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or the Higher Education Act (HEA)—or pass new laws to establish programs and authorize federal spending levels.

Appropriations Priorities

The legislative branch can set aside federal funds for a specific use and fund priority programs.

Regulations

The executive branch can initiate a rulemaking process based on existing legislative language through an executive authority or regulatory agency.

Executive Actions

The executive branch can provide guidance and technical assistance on problems of practice. And it can (along with the legislative branch) elevate concepts through the bully pulpit.

3 | Encourage distributive leadership models. A great principal cultivates leadership in his or her building by developing an instructional leadership team that is collectively responsible for curriculum and instruction, by creating space for teacher voice in decisions, by rewarding teachers with increased leadership responsibilities, and by mentoring staff in leadership skills. In return, the leadership team feels more invested in the success of the school and is able to support the principal in executing on the many responsibilities of leading a school.

Vehicles:

- Provide **technical assistance** sessions on structuring the teacher leader and assistant principal roles to support the principal in conducting teacher evaluations and other instructional leadership activities.
- **Convene** states and LEAs to collaborate and share best practices regarding the creation of distributive leadership models.

EXPAND THE PIPELINE TO BRING NEW TALENT INTO THE SYSTEM

4 | Encourage diverse candidates to seek school leadership positions. In order to recruit talent into the principalship, especially into high-need schools, we should not artificially limit pathways into leadership positions. While principals need strong school-based experience to be truly effective instructional leaders, skills from a diverse set of careers can supplement school-based experience and enhance leadership abilities. At New Leaders, we recognize that becoming a great principal requires a mix of skills, including teaching experience and adult leadership. We encourage a competency-based selection process that requires candidates to demonstrate key leadership skills paired with a minimum number of years of effective teaching experience.⁷ This practice prevents artificial limitations on the talent pool while also ensuring that candidates have the capacities needed to succeed and a demonstrated record of results.

Vehicles:

- Initiate a **rulemaking** process to set the eligibility criteria for grant competitions such that eligible entities must remove barriers to entry into the principalship for candidates whose school-based education experience is not their current occupation, or require eligible entities to allow candidates in principal preparation programs to serve as assistant principals or as other school-based leaders under the supervision and mentorship of a licensed administrator.
- **Invest** in systems to identify highly effective principals for turnaround schools or build specific developmental pathways for turnaround leaders. Only fund grantees that directly address the quality of leaders to carry out turnaround strategies.

1. Omer, S. (2011, September 26). *Classroom 'Crisis': Many Teachers Have Little or No Experience*. NBC News. Retrieved from http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44505094/ns/us_news-education_nation/t/classroom-crisis-many-teachers-have-little-or-no-experience/#.UG-cfXCAApw

2. Marvel, J., Lyter, D., Peltola, P., Strizek, G., & Morton, B. (2006). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey*. (NCES 2007–307). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007307.pdf>

3. The New Teacher Project (2012). *The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools*. Brooklyn, NY: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved from <http://tnp.org/irreplaceables>

4. Ibid.

5. Adams, E., Ikemoto, G., & Taliaferro, L. (2012). *Playmakers: How Great Principals Build and Lead Great Teams of Teachers*. New York, NY: New Leaders. Retrieved from <http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/publications/playmakers/>

6. Ibid.

7. New Leaders recommends a strong focus on key skills including those related to pedagogy, instructional strategies, and data driven instruction. We also recommend setting two years of effective teaching as the minimum; while most of our program participants have more than two years teaching experience, our emphasis on competency keeps us from artificially limiting our talent pool while ensuring that candidates have the necessary experience to enter a principal preparation program.