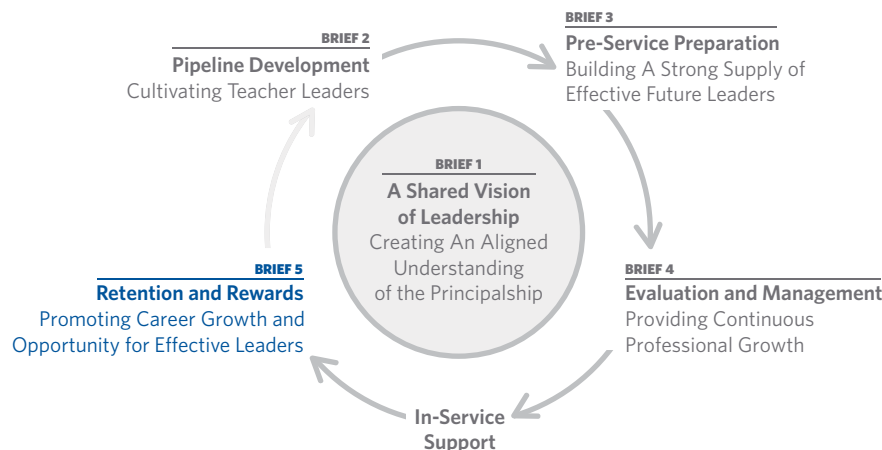


RETENTION AND REWARDS: PROMOTING CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS

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: FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE GREAT LEADERSHIP

Principals are the leverage point for education reforms and the primary drivers of school improvement.¹ A critical part of maintaining a corps of effective principals is rewarding and retaining the best school leaders. Unfortunately, few systems systematically identify principals that make important contributions to student learning or celebrate that success.

Despite the importance and demands of the principalship, most state and local educational agency (LEA) salary structures promote lockstep compensation based on years of experience and degree attainment. These systems ignore performance on the job, differences in school conditions, and variance in leadership responsibilities. The failure to recognize the hard work of great principals—through both a lack of recognition and singular compensation structures—and lack of meaningful growth opportunities make it difficult to recruit new talent and retain existing principals.

Finally, research has shown that high-poverty and high-minority schools are more frequently led by principals with weaker job ratings than lower-poverty schools.² And turnover in high-poverty schools is approximately ten percent higher than in low-poverty schools.³ A RAND Corporation report commissioned by New Leaders found that only 77.5 percent of all new principals across six urban districts were still in the role after three years.⁴ Principal turnover has been shown to be detrimental to school performance, especially in low-achieving schools.⁵ Given the turnover rates of principals across the country—especially in our hardest-to-staff schools—we must do more to encourage our best principals to stay in the schools where they are needed the most.

THE SOLUTION: OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW

In order to promote career advancement and retain the most talented leaders, federal policymakers should:

- **Recognize and reward great leaders;**
- **Support continued growth of school leaders; and**
- **Connect evaluation results and personnel decisions.**

RECOGNIZE AND REWARD GREAT LEADERS

I | Publically recognize talented school leaders. One of the best ways to acknowledge the hard work of great principals is through public recognition. Although it costs very little, public appreciation increases respect for the importance of the principal's role—recognizing that leadership matters—and celebrates the contributions of individual principals.

Vehicles:

- **Host** high-profile events in which you recognize the important contributions of talented school leaders. Ask teachers to speak to how a principal made his or her contributions to student success possible.
- **Bridge** the policy and practitioner divide by asking principals to review and contribute to federal policies to build understanding of how policies will play out at the school level. Principals can testify at committee hearings, speak on panels, and review and contribute to policy documents.
- **Continue** the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department's) **Principal Ambassador Fellowship (PAF)** program and expand it to include full-time principal fellows located in Washington, DC. Fellows in DC will bring expertise to the federal level, obtain hands-on experience with policy-making, and be recognized for their contributions to student learning. *(Note: The PAF program, initially launched in school year 2013-2014, is modeled after the successful Teacher Ambassador Fellowship (TAF) program and provides opportunities for excellent principals to engage in policymaking by advising Department staff on a part-time basis from the field.)*

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.

2 | Encourage non-financial rewards. Beyond public recognition and financial incentives, there are other ways to reward principals that get results for their students. These rewards will not only recognize great leadership, they will also aid in retaining the best principals.

Vehicles:

- Through **rulemaking** to provide priority and preference points, or through requirements in **amended statute**, encourage states and LEAs to reward their best principals serving high-need students and encourage them to move to or stay in the highest-need schools through incentives such as a strategic staffing model and balanced autonomy. These rewards do double duty by recognizing leader accomplishments and allowing great principals to be even better at their jobs. For more information, please see the brief entitled “**A Shared Vision of Leadership: Creating an Aligned Understanding of the Principalsip.**” (*Note: The strategic staffing initiative, implemented by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), is a model which allows great principals to pick a team of talented teachers to bring with them to a turnaround school.*)
- Initiate a **rulemaking** process to provide priority and preference points in competitive grant competitions to entities that provide balanced autonomy—including staffing authority—to principals selected to lead chronically under-performing schools.
- Through **executive action** or **statute**, codify methods to learn from great principals and share their successes. Identify and disseminate information on promising principal practices through the **What Works Clearinghouse** (WWC). Ask principals participating in the PAF program to record their practices for an online database of promising practices. One example of an online library is America Achieves’ *Spotlight on Promising Practices* video series. Videos such as “**Great Principals: Building A Culture for Success,**” “**Great Principals: Making Data Useful,**” and “**Great Principals: Developing Every Teacher**” provide a look at effective principal practices accompanied by policy recommendations for scaling these practices. (*Note: The WWC is administered by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) at the Department; the WWC studies evidence of effectiveness and disseminates information on credible practices, programs, or policies.*)

SUPPORT CONTINUED GROWTH OF SCHOOL LEADERS

3 | Incent states and LEAs to improve human capital management systems. Comprehensive human capital management systems (HCMS) cover the entire spectrum of human capital management—including recruitment and hiring; compensation, development, and promotion; and retention and dismissal. When designed well, an HCMS can help educators envision a long-term role for themselves, instead of simply providing isolated bonuses. If a comprehensive HCMS is not feasible, states and LEAs should, at a minimum, find opportunities for principals to grow in their jobs. As states and LEAs reimagine the role of the principal manager in supporting principals, school leaders can be given opportunities to grow into those positions. Excellent principals can run communities of practice in their LEA and mentor aspiring principals in their schools. LEAs could also adopt the international model of letting highly-effective principals manage a number of schools.

Vehicles:

- Through **rulemaking** to provide priority and preference points or through requirements in **amended statute**, encourage states and districts to pilot new performance-based compensation and HCMS that pair salary bumps with increased leadership responsibilities and a pattern of effectiveness in the job.
- Continue to **invest** in the **Teacher Incentive Fund** (TIF) program and recognize the importance of school leadership in comprehensive human capital management by adding “leader” to the program name.

Grantees from TIF-4 are required to “make public” their efforts and we encourage new salary schedules and HCMS to become open source and easily accessible. Moving forward, TIF-5 should include a heavier focus on promoting opportunities for principals to grow in their jobs. (*Note: TIF is a competitive grant program that funds the development and implementation of performance-based teacher and principal compensations systems in high-need schools.*)

- **Authorize** or **fund** a Race to the Top-Transforming Educational Leadership (RTT-TEL) competition. Similar to the **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge** (RTT-ELC) or the **Race to the Top-District** (RTT-D) competition, fund states or LEAs with comprehensive plans to transform educational leadership—from teacher leadership to assistant principals to principals to principal managers.

CONNECT EVALUATION RESULTS AND PERSONNEL DECISIONS

4 | **Require states to codify the link between principal evaluation results and personnel decisions.** As part of making new evaluation and support systems meaningful, states need LEAs to link the whole range of personnel decisions to effectiveness data from robust principal evaluations systems that accurately and consistently differentiate principal performance based on a pattern of effectiveness over time. Making personnel decisions—retaining and rewarding great principals and dismissing low-performing ones—based on effectiveness data reinforces the legitimacy of evaluation and support systems. For more information, please see the brief entitled “**Evaluation and Management: Continuous Professional Growth.**”

Vehicle:

- **Amend** ESEA to require—as a condition of receiving Title I funds—states to ensure that all LEAs that receive subgrant funds develop and implement an evaluation and support system that, among other requirements, is used to inform personnel decisions. (*Note: While many states have developed new principal evaluation and support systems through the Department’s ESEA flexibility initiative, we believe ESEA reauthorization should require all states to design and implement robust systems that evaluate principals and encourage ongoing professional growth through tailored support and development activities.*)

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