LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

SHAPING STRONG SCHOOL LEADERS

by Denisa R. Superville
Staff writer, Education Week
Some Takeaways From Recent Research

- 50% of principals leave their schools after 3 years
- Districts spend about $75,000 to train and prepare principals for the job
- Principal “churn” costs school districts about $163 million annually
- Principals who are not given professional development are 1.4 times more likely to leave. *(Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover)*
- Aspiring leaders receive inadequate coaching and training on key skills. *(Building Pathways to School Leadership)*

**What Districts can do:**

- Align goals, strategies, structures and resources in the district to support principals
- Foster a culture of collective responsibility, balanced autonomy and continuous learning and improvement
- Implement systems and policies to allow principals to effectively manage talent in their buildings. *(Building Principals at Scale)*
“Shaping Strong School Leaders”
How Districts Are Responding to Research

◆ Building a principal pipeline—from start to finish
  ◆ Strategic focus by some districts, including Hillsborough County, Fla., and Denver, on growing principals from within
  ◆ Creating leadership opportunities for aspiring principals, including teachers. In Denver, 1 in 5 teachers serves in a leadership role. 80% of principals come from within the system
  ◆ Partnering with local universities to develop tailored principal preparation programs
  ◆ Mapping potential principal vacancies
  ◆ Matching aspiring principals’ skills and backgrounds with schools’ needs
  ◆ Providing continuous professional development, coaching and mentoring for principals

◆ A focus on aspiring principals
  ◆ A more thoughtful approach to preparing aspiring principals for the job and matching aspiring principals’ skills with the district’s needs
  ◆ Expanding aspiring principals’ responsibilities
  ◆ Preparing assistant principals for actual challenges that they will face as principals
“Shaping Strong School Leaders”
How Districts Are Responding to Research

◆ Creating robust professional development and continuous learning opportunities
  ◆ Must be job-embedded
  ◆ Conducted over an extended period
  ◆ Promote distributive leadership
  ◆ Use a cohort model

◆ Rethinking the role of principal supervisors:
  ◆ Provide training and professional development for the supervisors
  ◆ Develop standards for supervisors
  ◆ Reduce the number of principals they oversee
  ◆ Shift the focus from compliance to support

◆ Distributing leadership
  ◆ E.g. Teacher-leadership
  ◆ Central office reorganization
Recent Research

◆ The Wallace Foundation:  [Reports on School Leadership](#)

◆ Bain & Company:  
[Building Pathways: How to Develop the next generation of transformational school leaders](#)

◆ The Thomas B. Fordham Institute:  
[Lacking Leaders: The Challenges of Principal Recruitment, Selection, and Placement](#)

◆ The George W. Bush Institute and New Leaders:  
[Great Principals At Scale: Creating District Conditions that Enable All Principals to be Effective](#)

◆ Center for American Progress:  
[The Changing Role of the Principal: How High-Achieving Districts Are Recalibrating School Leadership](#)

◆ Center on Reinventing Public Education:  
[Policy Barriers to School Improvement: What's Real and What's Imagined?](#)

◆ The School Leaders Network:  
[CHURN: The High Cost of Principal Turnover](#)
A Few Resources

- The Wallace Foundation
- New Leaders
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Center for Educational Leadership, University of Washington
Story Ideas

◆ New principals

◆ Professional development: How local districts are spending Title II funds and supporting principals at various stages in their careers.

◆ The diversity of the principal corps

◆ District partnerships with universities and non-profits

◆ District and charter principal training and exchange programs

◆ Principal preparation programs: Are they preparing principals for today’s job?