

Effective School Leadership

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School leaders matter

- A lot of qualitative evidence connecting school leaders to school performance and improvement going back nearly 40 years
 - Several recent large-scale studies taking advantage of longitudinal administrative data to identify “principal effects” on student test scores that are sizable (Branch et al., 2012; Coelli & Green, 2012; Grissom et al., 2015)
 - Also have rigorous empirical evidence that links school leadership to other important school outcomes, including teacher satisfaction, teacher retention, and the quality of the school’s instructional program (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012)
- School leaders matter, and some leaders are more effective than others

What makes some school leaders more effective?

- Several large-scale data collections aimed at answering this question
- Longitudinal study of principal effectiveness in 4 urban school districts
 - Leader time-use data from in-person observations
 - Surveys measuring leadership skills of assistant principals and principals
 - Hundreds of principal interviews
 - Use administrative data systems to link principals to school and teacher outcomes
- Study of principal data use for talent management decision-making in 8 urban systems
- Recent work through the Tennessee Education Research Alliance to link evaluation, survey, and administrative data on all school leaders in Tennessee



What we've learned about effective leadership

1. Effective principals have good organizational management skills

- Principal **organizational management skills** consistently correlated with student test score growth, teacher satisfaction, and teacher and parent ratings of school climate
 - Organizational management: hiring, budgeting, maintaining school environment
- Effective principals spend more time on organizational management tasks
- But majority of principals' time is spent on **administration**
 - Compliance, scheduling, routine paperwork, before/after school duty

2. Effective principals are instructional leaders, but all kinds of instructional leadership are not created equal

- “Instructional leadership” means engagement with principal learning
- Average time spent on instruction is low (13%)
- Some aspects of instructional leadership seem to matter but not others
 - Overall time spent on instruction or in classrooms not correlated with student achievement growth
 - Half of instructional time spent on **walkthroughs**, but time simply walking through classrooms is negatively correlated with growth
 - But time spent on **teacher coaching, feedback, and teacher support** predict greater student growth
- Walkthroughs often are not strategic, focused on monitoring rather than teacher feedback

3. Effective principals are strategic talent managers

- **Talent management:** hiring, assigning, and retaining effective teachers
- Strategic, data-driven talent management presents big lever for principals to pull, but many barriers to pulling them
- High-growth schools hire more effective teachers, assign them more equitably
- In TN, we see evidence of **strategic retention** among effective principals
 - Retain their most effective teachers
 - Find ways to remove their least effective (including through “counseling out”)

Concluding observation: The context of school leadership is undergoing a big shift

- Widespread adoption of multiple-measures teacher evaluation systems
- Teacher observation central → School leaders are spending a lot more time in classrooms
 - Have much better information about their teachers and classrooms
- **BIG POTENTIAL:** Process (in theory) facilitates opportunities for feedback and professional learning targeted to teachers' needs, shaping of the teacher workforce
- **BUT:**
 1. We've largely ignored whether many principals have the capacity to do good observations, give good feedback, or use observations to drive improvement or decisions about hiring and retention
 2. We didn't do anything to take other responsibilities off principals' plates



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