

Researching the Influence of School Leaders on Student Outcomes

IES Technical Working Group

Meeting Summary

August 20, 2015

**80 F Street, N.W.
Washington, DC**

Participants

Invited Experts

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Chair, Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations
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Jason Grissom

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Invited Experts (Continued)

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Preamble

Everyone agrees school leadership is important. Research suggests that there are substantial (albeit mostly indirect) relationships between school leadership and student achievement. Over the past 40 years, the field has developed and tested various hypotheses about the leader characteristics, skills, knowledge, and behaviors that may be relevant to improving student outcomes. However, it is challenging for practitioners and policymakers to determine whether and how school leaders are making a difference in student achievement.

Through its Education Research Grants Program (84.305A), the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has tried to address this challenge by inviting research applications on school leadership, but the number of applications reviewed is low relative to other topics, and many important questions remain unanswered. IES hopes to expand its portfolio of research on the influence of school leaders on student outcomes. Therefore, during this Technical Working Group meeting, IES asked participants for their input on how to encourage research that can help

- Advance theory and build evidence on the relationships between leadership and student achievement;
- Operationalize these models into leadership standards or leadership roles;
- Assess the extent to which leaders meet these standards or fulfill these roles;
- Develop and evaluate professional development for leaders; and
- Determine the extent to which school leaders impact student achievement.

Meeting Summary

Welcome

The meeting began at 8:40 a.m.

Dr. Thomas Brock, Commissioner of the National Center for Education Research (NCER), welcomed the participants and expressed enthusiasm for the meeting topic, which he said urgently needed more attention in the field. Dr. Brock noted that he himself had done some investigation into educational leadership in community colleges when he worked for MDRC (formerly Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation) on “Achieving the Dream,” a national initiative designed to help community colleges make better use of data to improve instruction and services.

Dr. Brock noted that there is strong interest in school leadership—both in the federal government and at the state level. NCER has funded a few influential studies on the subject, but would like to fund more. Part of the problem is that not enough fundable proposals have been submitted.

One difficulty for research studies on education leadership is how to measure and assess leadership. Finding answers to that question is complicated by politics. In addition to measurement issues, Dr. Brock pointed to the difficulty in connecting quality of school leadership to student outcomes. Finally, there is the difficulty posed by there being too few individuals trained to conduct research on education leadership. He wondered whether there might be opportunities to interest researchers working in business or management fields in this topic.

Dr. Brock stated he wanted to hear people’s thoughts about where high-quality research is being done and where research is not being done but should be. Does IES need to offer different kinds of opportunities? He urged participants to be frank. While IES’s budget is not unlimited, he expects it to remain level in the immediate future. He mentioned that IES can also identify priorities through its Research and Development Centers and Research Networks. As examples, Dr. Brock pointed to the Standards and Schools Research and Development Center, started last year, as well as the College Completion and Early Learning Research Networks.

Dr. Katina Stapleton, Program Officer for the Improving Education Systems research portfolio, outlined the following two purposes of the meeting:

- To identify ways to encourage more research on education leadership to be undertaken in the field; and

- To identify ways to measure what education leaders do that can help students.

Dr. Stapleton then gave an overview of the IES-funded grants related to education leadership. These projects have been funded through several IES research grant programs since 2004, but are currently being funded through the [Improving Education Systems](#) research program within the [Education Research grant program](#) for FY 2016.

IES's investment in research on education leadership includes the following:

- The development and validation of leadership assessments;
- The development of interventions that will help principals and other school personnel become better leaders;
- The exploration of relationships between school leaders' knowledge/skills/behaviors and student achievement; and
- The evaluation of interventions for school principals.

Dr. Stapleton then described two other potential IES funding streams for research on education leadership that she believes are under-utilized. The first is NCER's [Researcher–Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research grant program](#), in which researchers and education agencies partner to conduct research that has direct implications for improving programs, processes, practices, or policies that may result in improved student outcomes. The second is the National Center for Special Education Research's [Special Education Policy, Finance, and Systems research program](#), which also funds research on systems-level practices and policies. She invited any of the participants who might have expertise in research partnerships or special education to present ideas during the course of the meeting.

Finally, Dr. Stapleton discussed the need for research on leaders other than principals (e.g., assistant principals, leaders at the district or regional level). She also noted that the current funding timeframes for NCER-funded studies of school leadership make it difficult for researchers to collect and analyze student outcomes before the end of the grant.

Panel 1: Framing the Issue

Robert Marzano and Jacqueline Wilson

Dr. Marzano, CEO of Marzano Research, provided a broad overview of research challenges that have emerged in education since his seminal studies of school and district leadership.

Dr. Marzano noted that lack of reliable measures of effective leadership at the school- and district-level inhibits research on education leadership. He noted that nomenclature, defining complex behaviors, and differences in opinion about what concepts mean make it difficult to interpret and compare the results of studies. For example, one study might conclude that effective school leaders exhibit “visibility,” while a second study might use a different term to describe the same underlying “visibility” construct, and a third study might use the term “visibility” but mean something that is conceptually different from how it is used in the first study. In effect, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the construct underlying many of the independent variables regarding leadership characteristics in extant literature.

Other challenges Dr. Marzano identified included the need for the field to

- Identify the most important functions of school leaders in order to help leaders prioritize their efforts;
- Explore the distribution of leadership roles/responsibilities within schools; and
- Identify what kind of supports (such as professional learning communities) can help guide the leadership process.

Dr. Wilson, Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Delaware and Director of the Delaware Academy for School Leadership, discussed the “refresh” of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. Dr. Wilson jointly chaired the 2014 ISLLC refresh committee with Joseph Murphy.

According to Dr. Wilson, the first set of standards, published in 1996, emphasized instructional leadership. In 2008, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), along with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), issued a new version of the standards that changed the emphasis to leaders’ functions—i.e., what leaders are expected to do. Dr. Wilson discussed an ongoing debate about how many standards are really

necessary (and are they the right ones). A new committee has been formed to review the proposed 2015 standards.¹

PANEL 1 DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Following the panel presentation, a group discussion centered on the following themes related to leadership standards:

- The degree to which ISLCC standards are policy based and the quality of research supporting the new professional standards (2015);
- The need to empirically test assumptions that leadership standards are based on; and
- The way in which leadership standards are being used and the degree to which the use of standards actually leads to improvement.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANEL 1

- More and better research is needed on principal leadership and how to help principals make changes in their practice. In particular, IES should support research into whether evaluating principals based on leadership standards works to improve principal retention or other desirable leadership and student outcomes.
- IES should challenge researchers to investigate the validity of the underlying theories of leadership that leadership standards are based on.
- IES should support research into what standards are currently being used to assess principal performance and how schools and school districts deal with leadership standards.
- Research is needed to inform the improvement of measures of practice and to develop more sensitive measures of near-term outcomes of leadership and leadership interventions.

¹ Subsequently, in November 2015, the [Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015](#) were published.

Panel 2: Testing Theoretical Models Through Exploratory Research

Jason Grissom and Elaine Allensworth

Dr. Grissom, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Education in the Department of Leadership, Policy & Organizations at Vanderbilt University, discussed his IES-funded [exploratory study](#) conducted with Susanna Loeb, which aimed to identify the specific attributes, skills, orientations, and behaviors of school leaders that are associated with positive school outcomes.

The research team estimated the relationship(s) between school-leader characteristics and school outcomes (including teacher turnover, school climate, and student achievement). The team initially worked with four urban districts (some dropped out), using the following data collection techniques:

- Annual surveys of principals, vice principals, and teachers;
- Interviews with principals; and
- Full-day observations of principals. Over the life of the project, they captured 750 days of principal practice.

Their major findings include the following:

- Principals' skills in organizational management had a large and consistent association with measures of school outcomes, much larger than associations with other skill sets, such as management of instruction.
- Overall time spent by principals on instructional issues correlated negatively with student achievement growth, though some specific categories of instructional time, such as coaching of teachers, correlated positively.
- Results from one study raised substantial concerns about the validity of the use of student test scores to measure principal performance.
- Teacher collaboration was associated with positive student outcomes, suggesting that principal support for teacher collaboration is a promising strategy for school improvement.

Dr. Grissom noted that given these findings, it is important to question the current tendency to privilege principals' role as instructional leader over other functions (such as organizational management).

Dr. Allensworth, Director of the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research and Managing Director of the University of Chicago Urban

Education Institute, said that her [IES-funded study](#) of school leaders in the Chicago public schools produced an answer to the question of what effective principals do. Specifically, effective principals foster a climate that promotes safety/order and sets academic expectations. In comparing schools that made improvements with schools that did not, her study found that, on the whole, the high-achieving schools had a strong safety climate. In turn, her study found that schools with stronger climates were those in which teachers had considerable power over decision-making about safety issues.

Overall, her study found that effective principals had

- Clear, coherent goals that were articulated in similar ways among all respondents in the school, rather than many unconnected goals;
- A focus on students (not on teachers or curricula);
- A focus on monitoring student data around the goals with teacher teams; and
- Systems and strategies for achieving goals that provided universal supports (i.e., rather than leaving it to individual teachers).

PANEL 2 DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Following the panel presentation, group discussion focused on the following issues:

- It can be difficult to determine how long it takes for a good principal to make a difference, especially in low-achieving schools. Current research does not provide a convincing time estimate for assessing leadership intervention impacts. A handful of studies point to 4 or 5 years as a marker for measuring results, which is challenging given standard IES funding timelines.
- A culture of safety is essential for student improvement. Many questions remain around safety factors, such as: What is the priority for school leadership? What should a principal do first in an unsafe school? Should he or she impose discipline, make sure that teachers impose order, get behavior coaches to help students change their behavior?
- Causes of principal turnover and retention warrant further study, including frustration with politics, especially with regard to school boards, and the influence of federal policies such as Race to the Top.
- Trying to discern leadership impact is challenging when there are so many potentially confounding variables in schools.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANEL 2

- Further research should be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of instructional leadership compared to the effectiveness of other things that principals do (such as creating safe school environments or managing school resources).
- Research should be funded on the effects of principal retention on student achievement, as well as on the reasons for non-retention (conflicts with school boards, policies such as Race to the Top, etc.).
- More studies should be undertaken to test the provisional conclusion that a safe and orderly school environment promotes improved student achievement and that promoting such an environment is something that effective principals do.
- IES should continue to recommend that grantees share their study findings broadly and in ways that are readily accessible by practitioners and policymakers.
- IES could provide reviewers with guidance on content features to look for in a strong leadership study.

Panel 3: Evaluating School Leaders

Matthew Clifford, Ellen Goldring, Richard Halverson, and Elizabeth Warner

Dr. Clifford, Principal Researcher in the Education Program of the American Institutes for Research (AIR), oversees a portfolio of research and evaluation studies and provides services to the field around principal evaluation and coaching. He currently oversees three studies, looking at principal professional development, principal preparation, and principal evaluation.

Dr. Clifford reported on a study completed in 2013 for the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, a national content center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. At that time, 50 states and 2 territories had adopted new educational evaluation policies, to assess both teachers and principals. Forty-eight states have adopted the ISLLC standards, although they customize them to their particular needs. The new policies reemphasize the need for annual evaluations. Most states allow school districts 2 years to design and launch new evaluation systems. With funding from the Wallace Foundation, Dr. Clifford and colleagues are updating the policy analysis and have launched an interactive website on policy standards at www.principalstandards.gtlcenter.org.

There are relatively few models for principal evaluation. States are currently selecting from among the following four models:

- The local-control approach—districts develop their own models aligned with district/regional education priorities and values (e.g., Vermont). Reliability and uniformity may be sacrificed with this approach.
- The single evaluation model—the model is adopted statewide, with very little latitude, which improves reliability and uniformity but allows for little local adaptation to local/regional educational priorities (e.g., Mississippi, US Virgin Islands, Tennessee).
- The cafeteria approach—the state offers four to five models for districts to pick from (e.g., New York).
- State models plus local control—the state suggests four to five models, but local districts can request a waiver and use their own evaluation system (e.g., Idaho and Maine).

Most state principal performance evaluation systems include practice measures and outcome measures. Practice measures may include observation and rating of principal feedback to teachers, principal completion of annual professional growth plans, and principal portfolios.

Although all states have passed new legislation, and many states are piloting new principal evaluation systems, few states are studying how well their principal evaluation systems perform. A scan of leadership research by Dr. Clifford and colleagues identified eight studies that examined principal evaluation systems' quality and impact. All of the identified studies examined client satisfaction with system implementation, but none examined impact on principal practice improvement using independent measures, principal retention/mobility, improved school culture, or improved student learning. Further, he noted that few states have taken steps to validate principal evaluation frameworks and instruments (an example is Pennsylvania), and few states have publicly reported statistics on inter-rater agreement, rater severity, or other standard measures of personnel evaluation system performance.

Dr. Clifford described the following challenges to designing effective principal evaluations:

- Identifying sound and predictive measures, particularly for principal observation and 360-degree surveys. Few measures are proven to be

valid and reliable. An exception is the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (see below).

- Differentiating accurately between evaluation measures. Unfortunately, the typical results don't show that sufficient distinctions were made between school years, don't reveal much about the qualities of the principal under consideration, and so forth.
- Executing studies of principal evaluation system performance remains challenging for states, given limited availability of state-level funding for research, evaluation system implementation timelines, system scale-up strategies, and the relatively low number of principals.
- States also remain challenged to maintain focus on principal evaluation systems development, given the pressure to evaluate teachers.

Dr. Goldring, Chair of the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations, Peabody College, at Vanderbilt University discussed the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education ([VAL-ED](#)) project, which was funded by the Wallace Foundation and IES. VAL-ED is an evidenced-based rating scale that assesses principals' behaviors known to directly influence teachers' performance and, in turn, students' learning. The assessments incorporate input from all members of the school's professional community: the principal rates him- or herself; the teachers rate the principal; and the principal's supervisors rate the principal. This is a 360-degree methodology in which the findings lie in the "gaps" between the various ratings. The rating process is administered online.

Dr. Goldring noted the tepid response coming from the scientific, practice, and policy fields regarding the uses and consequences of principal evaluation data and suggested that there are other data-based, objective ways to evaluate principals than evaluations or judgments by teachers, supervisors, and self-feedback/reflection by principals. For example:

- Principals could receive evaluation around the quality of newly hired teachers by tracking the effectiveness of new teachers over time.
- Principals could be evaluated based on the percentage of ineffective teachers who improve and grow, given reliable and valid teacher evaluation scores.
- Principals could be evaluated based on the alignment between professional development support and teachers' areas of growth, such as through examination of professional development plans and professional development engagement.

- Principals could be evaluated in terms of how effective they are at retaining highly effective teachers.

Dr. Goldring pointed out the lack of consensus in defining effective principal evaluation indicators, underscoring the need for more study.

Dr. Halverson, Professor in the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, offered his thoughts on the future of leadership evaluation. He has worked on developing the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning ([CALL](#)) survey, also supported by IES.

The CALL survey, used in over 300 schools in the United States and abroad, raises questions about what school leaders do and how their work should be guided. Rather than focusing on an individual leader, such as the principal, CALL measures the tasks carried out by various individuals across the school. The survey uses a 360-degree methodology. All administrators, teachers, and other instructional staff in the school take the CALL survey, and schools receive a customized plan detailing the key tasks for improvement. Dr. Halverson explained that CALL is not really an evaluation instrument, but it can provide a baseline measure of coaching-based improvement.

Dr. Halverson encouraged the participants to consider alternative models for thinking about education leadership. As an example of how this can be done, he described an alternate learning model that resides outside of school and in which learners (including adult learners) join “affinity spaces.” Those who participate in affinity spaces form “distribution networks,” and then expand to “discourse communities,” and thereby grow the field. Such communities are familiar to online gaming fans, for example, but could be relevant to an academic environment as well, and this alternate approach could address the issue of whether students’ performance on tests has any bearing on how well they adapt to their lives beyond school.

Dr. Halverson would like to see research that explores the question: “What does education leadership look like in the context of affinity space-based learning?”

Dr. Warner, Economist in the Evaluation Division of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, discussed the following three investigations being conducted by IES that are focused wholly or in part on evaluation of principals:

- Impact Evaluation of Support for Principals (2014–2019);
- Impact Evaluation of Teacher and Leader Performance Evaluation Systems (2011–2017); and

- Impact Evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (2009–2017).

In the [Impact Evaluation of Support for Principals](#), a randomized controlled trial (RCT) taking place in 100 schools will provide evidence on the effectiveness of a principal professional development (PD) program and its ability to improve principals' leadership skills and school quality. The treatment condition includes a heavy emphasis on instructional leadership activities, such as school walkthroughs and classroom observations, accompanied by constructive feedback. The ultimate goal of the principal's support will be facilitating teacher growth and improving student achievement. The program targets high-poverty districts. The first year's report is due in spring 2018.

The [Impact Evaluation of Teacher and Leader Performance Evaluation Systems](#) is designed to examine the implementation and impacts of a package of performance evaluation system components, including measures of student achievement growth, classroom observations, and measures of principal leadership. Teachers, leaders, and districts have received constructive feedback on teacher and principal performance. Principals in the approximately 15 study schools within each of the 8 participating districts received feedback on their performance based on VAL-ED, which was administered twice each study year. A report of the study's first year is expected by spring 2016.

The [Impact Evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund \(TIF\)](#) is investigating the effect of performance-based pay on high-performing teachers in low-performing schools with high-need students. One of the study questions is, "How do teachers and principals in schools that did or did not offer pay-for-performance bonuses compare on key criteria?" Although the first year's report was issued before the first actual pay-for-performance payouts were distributed, some information was already available. Preliminary findings indicated that educators in schools that offered pay-for-performance bonuses tended to be less satisfied *overall* than those in schools that did not offer such bonuses. However, educators in schools offering pay-for-performance bonuses were satisfied specifically with the opportunity to earn additional pay, even though a greater percentage indicated they felt pressured to perform due to the TIF program.

PANEL 3 DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Following the panel presentation, the group discussed the following topics:

- Whether all students can succeed in the types of personalized, community-based learning environments described by Dr. Halverson (for example, ones involving discourse communities or ones built on student choice). Questions include: What is the teacher's or principal's role in that environment? How would they be evaluated?

- How to find schools that are interested in trying new approaches and willing to be part of implementation research. Questions include: Could there be a registry or matching process facilitated by IES so it is not left up to the researchers to recruit schools? What types of incentives (e.g., federal grants) might be appropriate for schools to be research sites?
- How IES could attract more innovative leadership researchers to the funding process, especially given a lack of response in the past.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANEL 3

- Fund more studies to learn what forms of principal evaluation are most effective and how well evaluation systems perform overall.
- Encourage more studies on principal practice as well as validation of measures of leadership quality.
- Encourage researchers to partner with states on proposals to examine principal evaluation system implementation and impact.
- Fund research on education leadership that integrates discovery models of learning and design.

Panel 4: Developing and Evaluating Professional Development for School Leaders

Beatriz Ceja, Cheryl King, and Roger Goddard

Ms. Ceja, Program Manager of the [School Leadership Program](#) at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), began by describing the discretionary grant program that supports the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor principals (including assistant principals) for high-need local education agencies.

More than 60 grants have been funded in this program, at different funding levels, between 2002 and 2013. In some cases, the same organization has been funded more than once. Collecting data on the program is difficult because the funded groups have focused on different aspects of professional development (PD) for principals (e.g., sometimes coaching is included, though it is unclear what kind of coaching and how much coaching was involved), and the cohorts have been small.

Some of the questions that have arisen from grantees concerning principal professional development pertain to rigor, intensity, and duration. For example, should first-year principals receive the same level of PD as fifth-year principals?

What PD is appropriate for principals who move from one school to another within the same district? For principals who are participants in the School Leadership Program and move to a different district not partnered with the grant, should they continue to receive grant-funded PD?

Ms. Ceja indicated that, although she believes that coaching of principals is very helpful, it has been difficult to consolidate results and, therefore, difficult to make an argument for more funding for this area of research. The impact of the services and preparation of principals has been difficult to capture. Additionally, research that meets the What Works Clearinghouse standards regarding PD for principals or principal preparation is scarce. Consequently, using evidence-based criteria for the School Leadership Program created various obstacles such that it was made an invitational priority. This resulted in only seven grantees responding to the invitational priority, and of the seven, only two submitted findings that contained some element of evidence or validation.

Ms. Ceja also noted that new allowances for many discretionary programs to add 2 additional years for grantees to collect additional data on the effectiveness of the interventions being implemented through the initial grant could allow for greater understanding of the program's impact. Without data, it's difficult to know if one intervention worked better than the other. One problem, she stated, is that applicants tend to feel that receiving federal funds to implement an intervention is proof that the approach works. Some applicants seem reluctant to follow up with an actual evaluation component.

Dr. King, Principal Investigator and Director of Quality Measures for Principal Preparation at the Education Development Center in Waltham, MA, spoke on the subject of principal preparation. Her comments were based on lessons learned in over a decade of work with preparation program providers, states, and large urban school districts. Using Quality Measures™ Tools and Protocols, to facilitate preparation program reviews, Dr. King and her team work with training program providers and school districts to assess the extent to which preparation programs are having an impact on school leader performance. This work has been principally funded by the Wallace Foundation and IES (through the [National Research and Development Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools](#)).

The primary lessons learned included the following:

- Strengthening and sustaining partnerships between districts and principal training providers, based on local context, is essential to ensure the development and growth of effective school leaders.
- Evidence-based approaches to program self-assessment are particularly useful in developing shared understandings of effective practices and

identifying areas of focus for a joint reform agenda between school districts and preparation program providers.

- Research-based interventions implemented and studied for the purpose of increasing the impact of school leaders on school, teacher, and student performance must become a priority.
- The extent to which training programs collect and use principal performance data from school districts during the first 3 years of induction—and whether such data are used to determine the types of programmatic changes needed—is another area requiring further study.

At some point, Dr. King would like to evidentially link teacher and principal training to school, teacher, and student performance. She stated that the outcomes of preparation and training seem successful at the moment, but the evidence is not well developed.

She expressed regret that many principals are not followed after completion of their formal training programs. Dr. King believes that the preparation programs should follow the principals they have graduated to determine whether their training is having an impact. More broadly, there is a need to examine to what extent training programs collect and use performance data from school districts to guide preparation practices.

Dr. Goddard, Novice G. Fawcett Chair of Educational Administration in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University, discussed his IES-funded experiment on the efficacy of the Balanced Leadership Professional Development Program for School Leaders. The [study](#) involved 127 elementary schools in Northern Michigan. The schools were rural and poor. The study asked both teachers and principals about principals' leadership knowledge and behavior, school climate, and teachers' collaborative and instructional practices. The study examined the causal impact of the professional development program for school leaders on teacher and principal perceptions of school climate and instruction, educator turnover, and student achievement.

Findings revealed discrepancies between teachers' and principals' perception in many areas. For example, while treatment school principals believed their leadership knowledge and skill had increased, teachers did not see growth in these areas. Similarly, while treatment principals generally reported improvements in the climates of their schools, their teachers did not. One area where treatment principals did *not* report substantively significant growth, however, was in their own involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Thus, while principals worked with other principals during the PD sessions, it may be that they did not work with their own teachers differently or in ways that teachers noticed as different based on the training. This may be why

principals said they loved the training they received and that it gave them more confidence while at the same time it made no difference to student achievement. Thus, the benefits of the principal training do not appear to have filtered down enough to the teachers to have impacted students. In addition, while principals who received the training were significantly less likely to leave their positions than those who did not—and teachers in schools where principals received the training were also less likely to leave during the time of the study—these reductions in participant turnover did not translate into significant learning gains for students. Dr. Goddard regarded these findings as reflective of potential shortcomings in the design of the PD.

Dr. Goddard also noted that it was necessary to keep the principals in the control schools from receiving the PD training to avoid contamination in the experiment. Treatment school principals may have interpreted this as reason to not involve their teachers. He regards this as a disadvantage of the study design. Other possible reasons Dr. Goddard noted for the lack of impact on student achievement included the observation of one case study treatment principal that he/she needed more central office support and another who noted that he/she could not “do it alone.”

A notable finding of the study was based on a quasi-experimental study that did not evaluate the PD but rather examined the conditions that predicted student learning in the study schools prior to the beginning of the PD. The study showed that the greater the instructional leadership teachers reported in their principals, the greater the degree to which teachers reported collaborating frequently on instructional improvement. Teacher collaboration, in turn, was a significant predictor of the level of collective efficacy beliefs in schools, which in turn positively and significantly predicted differences among schools in 3rd grade students’ mathematics and reading achievement.

PANEL 4 DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Following the panel presentation, the group discussed several issues and raised the following questions:

- Over the years, OII’s School Leadership program did not require that grantees evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions, making it difficult for grantees to present evidence-based results to show that coaching made a difference in PD. Could the requirement to present evidence be written into the grant solicitation? Could the funded grants themselves be viewed as an opportunity to produce evidence?
- Are potential applicants to OII and IES grant programs interested in rigorous evaluation, and what is the right amount of grant money to attract more applicants to the programs?

- Little is known about assistant principals.
- The degree to which PD matters to principal success. Are principals ready at the start to handle the challenges of their position? What interventions could be provided, if needed?

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANEL 4

- Research should examine whether principal training programs are producing a pipeline of high-performing principals who meet or exceed school district expectations and whether principal impact on school, teacher, and student performance is linked to preparation and training.
- IES could fund studies that would evaluate the success of principal training programs.
- IES should encourage use of similar measures across leadership studies to facilitate comparisons and conclusions regarding what works and what does not work.
- IES should encourage applicants to study larger samples and involve more states and school districts to increase generalizability.
- IES should fund more studies of the effects/effectiveness of principal coaching.

Final Thoughts From TWG Members

At the end of the meeting, each participant was asked to give suggestions about how IES can support more research on school leadership.

Dr. Marzano suggested that perhaps principals should change every 2 to 3 years, as is done in the military with those in leadership positions.

Dr. Wilson expressed concern about punitive performance evaluation systems and cautioned that soon there won't be any leaders/principals left. Instead, the emphasis should be on professional growth.

Dr. Grissom emphasized the need for longer grant periods, for more human capital (e.g., more people working in this area), and for greater emphasis on measurement (e.g., the establishment of a National Center for Leadership Performance and Assessment).

Dr. Allensworth also noted a preference for longer grant periods so that student outcomes can be studied in connection with principal performance.

Dr. Clifford noted that opening up more measures of achievement was a good idea, particularly when the validated measures offer opportunities to examine near-term impact of leadership interventions. Additionally, he believes that we should invest in developing better measures of principal practice quality. He is also concerned that we know very little about how principals are selected and hired and about principal workforce attrition/mobility.

Dr. Goldring stated that a lack of resources makes it difficult to focus on student achievement. She suggested that IES drop the link to student achievement for now—given that grants have relatively short time periods and that it is, therefore, difficult to establish a connection between principal performance and student outcomes—and break studies down into smaller components to test even basic assumptions.

Dr. Halverson maintained that outcomes should not be linked to test scores nor used as a way of measuring success. He pleaded for more flexibility in interpreting outcomes.

Ms. Ceja agreed that the pool of qualified and available principals (from the pool of assistant principals) is shrinking. She also noted that there are still not many applicants for OII's School Leadership grants.

Dr. King indicated that it is essential to link principal performance and student outcomes. She thought IES's partnership grants would be an attractive source of funding for studying principal performance.

Dr. Goddard indicated that emphasis should be on measures of leadership training that affects teacher practice (instructional change), which would require a longer study period.

Wrap-Up

Dr. Brock concluded the meeting by saying that the Institute would be examining the notes from the day's discussion as it begins work on the FY2016 Requests for Applications (RFAs). He noted that some recommendations may require more thought or take time to implement, while others could be made in the near future. Finally, Dr. Brock thanked the participants and emphasized that the Institute is open to participants' ideas at any time.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.