



Talking points to strengthen
the assistant principal's role
in the principal pipeline

Encourage New

Too often, assistant principals say they are slotted into management and discipline roles, shrinking the time and opportunities available for building leadership skills. And yet, better school leadership equals better student outcomes. Research reveals why assistant principals should be groomed for leadership, and how it's done. Use these research-based talking points to make the case for strengthening professional learning experiences for aspiring and assistant principals.

MAKING THE CASE

- Well-designed, district-run principal preparation programs groom high-potential assistant principals for principal assignments of their own.
- Properly trained assistant principals perform at higher levels. Faculty have a better instructional experience, and students have a better educational experience.
- Schools with newly placed principals from principal pipelines—often including former assistant principals—outperform comparison schools in reading and math.
- When Broward County (Florida) Public Schools implemented an initiative that included mentorship for assistant principals tailored to their years of experience, the number of schools rated D or F plummeted from about 40 to eight.
- Better-prepared principals stay on the job longer even in high-need urban and rural schools. Longevity boosts student achievement.
- Graduates of exemplary leadership development programs feel “significantly better prepared for instructional leadership and management of school improvement.”

THE KEYS TO LEADERSHIP

- A leader tracking system creates fact-based profiles of the skills, experience, and ratings of assistant principals, allowing data-driven decisions that place the right people in the right jobs.
- The hallmarks of strong training programs for assistant principals aspiring to be principals are rigorous selection of participants; a coherent, instruction-focused curriculum; fully paid internships; peer networks that

provide support after training ends; capable instructors and coaches with extensive real-world experience; and that tracks graduates' on-the-job performance and identifies training weaknesses.

- Assistant principals enrolled in pathways to principalships can test various aspects of the job. Examples include residencies that embed assistant principals with expert principals for a year and collaborations with university partners.
- Strategic design can strengthen programs that prepare teachers for assistant principal positions. Hillsborough County Public Schools focused its Assistant Principal Induction Program on the leadership competencies specifically needed by assistant principals.
- Three foundational tenets apply to collaborative leadership systems among principals and assistant principals: Shape and share the same core beliefs, prioritize teacher feedback, and emphasize that everyone—principals, assistant principals, and teachers—should always be learning. 🌱

Sources:

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