

A LAUNCHPAD FOR SUCCESS

Every successful space mission requires an influential captain. The same is true for successful schools. “Leadership is a key element in successful schools,” states the Learning First Alliance’s recently released *The Elements of Success: 10 Million Speak on Schools That Work*, which identifies elements of successful schools.

Of the six elements, one—distributed leadership—speaks specifically to the principal’s vital role, while the other five refer to elements that principals have significant influence on, such as teaching, climate, and family engagement.

This concept goes hand in hand with NPBEA’s *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*, NAESP’s *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, and The Wallace Foundation’s *The School*

Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, which affirms that principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction in impacting student achievement. “[Principals] can no longer function simply as building managers tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations, and avoiding mistakes,” the Wallace research suggests. “They have to be (or become) leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction.”

That brings us to Wallace’s five key practices of effective principals. Each one needs to interact with the other four in order to make a real difference for students.

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.

2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision.
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost.
5. Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement.

We are consistently hearing about what needs to be done, but it is up to the schools and districts to decide the *how*. This special resource guide addresses the *how*, using lessons learned from Wallace’s pipeline schools. •

An ESSA Moment: Investing in Principal Pipelines

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents states and districts with a unique opportunity to invest in principal pipelines. The law requires states to set aside 7 percent of Title I, Part A, funds to improve low-performing schools, which could include investments in school leadership activities. It also enables states to allocate up to 5 percent of their Title II, Part A, funding to investments in teacher and leader programs, with the option to reserve an additional 3 percent of funds for school leadership activities.

Recognizing that principals are critical to transforming schools, 24 states indicated in their state ESSA plans that they do intend to use the optional 3 percent to invest in

leadership. The use of these funds varies depending on state context, but most states are using the set-aside funds to focus on strengthening principal preparation, development, and support.

Examples of school leadership activities include the establishment of principal residencies, boosting job-embedded and cohort-based professional learning, and expanding mentorship opportunities for aspiring principals. State leaders are taking advantage of this “ESSA moment” and are targeting funding to boost principal pipelines, thereby strengthening principals’ capacity as instructional leaders who improve student outcomes.