

Why Is Principal Leadership So Important?

“Principals are widely seen as indispensable to innovation. No reform effort, however worthy, survives a principal’s indifference or opposition. When they are asked to lead projects they don’t fully grasp or endorse, they are likely to be ambivalent. Central office must remember the importance of allowing time for principals to thrash out their questions as they relate to changes” (Evans, 1996, p. 202).

“If you take the principal and other key building leaders out of the picture as a committed and skillful force for these qualities, then no successful PLC will form. The possibilities of all other forces combined (state education law and policy, standardized testing and accountability, central office staff development, parent and community pressure) to raise student achievement are fatally weakened” (Saphier, 2005, p. 38).

“Principals arguably are the most important players affecting the character and consequence of teachers’ school-site professional communities. Principals are culture-makers, intentionally or not” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006, p. 80).

“I know of no improving school that doesn’t have a principal who is good at leading improvement” (Fullan, 2007, p. 160).

“[Positive] outcomes are unlikely in the absence of building leadership that supports and holds teacher teams accountable for sustaining the inquiry process until they see tangible results” (Gallimore et al., 2009, p. 544).

“In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (Leithwood et al., 2009, p. 9).

“Our empirical results also attest strongly to the centrality of school leadership as a catalyst for change. . . . A major practical ‘take-away’: the centrality of principal leadership in initiating and sustaining the organizational changes necessary to improve student learning. Quite simply, school improvement is highly unlikely to occur in its absence” (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, pp. 199, 204).

“A particularly noteworthy finding . . . is the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement” (Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 3).

“Everyone shares a common aspiration for all students to attend high-quality schools. Yet, as the research definitively illustrates, that goal will remain out of reach without a similar commitment to high-quality principal leadership” (National Association of Secondary School Principals & National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013, p. 11).

“Principals who are strong, effective, responsive leaders help to inspire and enhance the abilities of their teachers and other school staff to do excellent work. . . . In short, principals, through their actions, can be powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools. And those practices can contribute much to the success of the nation’s students” (Manna, 2015, p. 7).

References

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