ALLIANCE TO REFORM EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE

THE GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE'S EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE

The Bush Institute's Education Reform Initiative aims to help increase student achievement for every child and improve the quality of our schools through initiatives focused on advancing accountability, principal leadership, and research-based practices in middle schools.

ALLIANCE TO REFORM EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Rooted in President and Mrs. Bush's belief that "excellent schools must first have excellent leaders," the Bush Institute developed the Alliance to Reform Education Leadership (AREL) to dramatically improve the way our Nation's principals are prepared and supported. AREL is one of the Bush Institute's flagship programs which signifies that school leaders are critical in raising achievement for students across the country. AREL is transforming districts' talent management of school principals and helping to ensure that school districts have the knowledge and tools to attract and retain effective principals.

AREL partners with nationally-known research organizations, school districts, and non-profits to:

- Identify research on what we know about effective school principals
- Study and share district policies and practices that support effective principals
- Create and disseminate tools and resources for states and school districts to put in place policies that enable principals to more effectively lead schools and increase student achievement
- Codify and share effective practices that improve the quality of school principals
- Increase attention from policymakers and the public on the importance of effective, well-supported leaders in schools

BACKGROUND

Research shows that principals account for 25% of a school's total impact on student achievement. Principals also play a critical role in hiring, training, supporting, and retaining effective teachers and improving the overall school climate. While significant focus has been paid to what we know about effective teachers in schools, little attention has been given to the role of the school leader despite the fact that districts are facing a shortage of high-quality principal candidates. AREL was launched to fill that knowledge gap.

"THE UNITED STATES FACES A SHORTAGE OF HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL LEADERS AT A TIME WHEN THE IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPALS IS MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER."

- President George W. Bush

PROGRAM IMPACT

Since the launch, AREL has convened partners, highlighted gaps in research and practice, and created case studies and tools for school districts, all with the goal of changing how school principals through the U.S. are prepared, recruited, hired, compensated, supported, and evaluated to positively impact student achievement.

Recent and upcoming initiatives include:

State Policy Analysis on Effective Principals

Released by the Bush Institute in 2013, *Operating in the Dark* is a first-of-its-kind report on states' policies that affect principal preparation, licensure, tenure, and data collection. This report explores how states are using their authority to increase the supply of effective principals focused on raising student achievement. The findings are based on self-reported data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. *Operating in the Dark* includes state policy recommendations to drive needed reforms and gives the educational community new insights on promising efforts by states to improve the supply of high-quality principals.

Tools and Resources for Educators

Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions That Enable Principals to Be Effective was released in 2014 through a partnership between AREL and New Leaders. The project included an in-depth literature review and work with an advisory group of more than 20 researchers and practitioners. The report includes a framework for how districts can support school leaders to enable them to drive dramatic change for students in their schools. Accompanying the report is the *Great Principals at Scale Toolkit*, which includes a set of tools school system leaders can use to assess the current status of their conditions, and identify priority areas and actions that they can put in place to enable all well-trained principals to be effective. The process of diagnosing and addressing conditions can begin to build the foundational culture that enables not just principals, but all district improvement efforts, to be effective. While very few districts have designed fully integrated and aligned systems that put school leadership at the core of their school improvement efforts, Gwinnett County Public Schools (the largest school system in Georgia) is an example of a district that is working to create an intentionally systemic school leadership strategy to improve schools and raise student achievement. In 2014, the Bush Institute released a *Case Study: Gwinnett County Public Schools: A Systemic Approach to Scaling Effective School Leadership* on the evolution of Gwinnett's approach to doing this important work. The case study is intended to illustrate how essential school leadership is as a driver of student achievement, and share Gwinnett's policies and practices that lead to highly effective school leadership.

Research Project on Principal Preparation

AREL is conducting a two-year principal preparation evaluation study with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to understand the link between principal preparation programs and student outcomes in five large districts across the United States. This study is underway and will be released in 2016.

Principal Talent Management Framework

In addition to principal preparation, AREL is focused on creating resources for school districts to get and keep effective school principals, which includes effective policies around recruitment and hiring, mentoring, evaluation and professional growth, compensation and incentives, and overall working conditions in a district. In partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), AREL is preparing a detailed literature review on the elements comprising a district's principal talent management system to understand which policies and practices on school leadership are supported by evidence and outline gaps in the research to share with the field. In addition, AREL is creating a comprehensive talent management framework that categorizes the district conditions and actions related to principal talent management and tools that districts can use to understand how their current policies and practices align with the essential elements of principal effectiveness.

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