

# Quality Leadership

## Issue Definition

In school systems, the leadership role is paramount. Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student achievement. School districts have enormous power to support principals and teachers in driving instructional improvement. Research has shown that when district leaders effectively address specific responsibilities, they have a profound, though indirect, positive impact on student achievement in their districts.

## Elements of an Effective System

Successful systems have leader development structures in place that develops leaders at all levels to manage systems effectively. They identify and develop leaders who can do the following:

- Build career ladders
- Recruit highly capable staff
- Create and sustain a positive school culture
- Garner broad agreement across stakeholder groups about rigorous academic goals for students and staff

In designing their leadership programs focused on building level leaders principals, top-performing states and nations typically follow key broad principles.

- They limit candidates for the principalship to people who have proven themselves to be highly effective teachers.
- Top-performing states work hard to build a deep pool of candidates for principal positions by grooming capable teachers who appear to have strong leadership potential. They groom them for the principal positions by offering them a succession of progressively demanding opportunities to lead teacher teams in the school.
- They train principals entirely on-the-job or through a combination of formal training and on-the-job training. Regardless of the approach, the training always involves a clinical experience and mentoring by a successful school leader.
- Top performers provide new school principals access to a group of experienced peers and mentors who support them in their career growth, guide them toward professional learning opportunities aligned to their aspirations, and help them realize their personal goals and goals for the growth of their students.
- They provide strong incentives for especially effective principals to take responsibility for mentoring less successful principals. In some cases, the most successful principals are asked to take responsibility for providing guidance to the principals of more than one low-performing school.
- Top-performing states and nations provide principals with opportunities to regularly visit other schools in their district, state, or province, and even other countries, to learn about successful practices in those schools, districts, and countries and adapt their own leadership practice accordingly. Such visits are intended to ensure leaders are continuously learning and to promote a benchmarking culture.

## Georgia Data

- 3.2** Average number of years of tenure of a district superintendent in Georgia; equivalent to the national average
- 22%** Average percentage of districts in Georgia with a change in superintendent every year
- 19%** Annual turnover of principals in Georgia
- 23%** Annual turnover of principals in Georgia schools in the highest poverty quartile
- 22%** Annual principal turnover in Georgia schools in the highest minority quartile

## Opportunities

To realize the benefits of local control and maximum flexibility, Georgia must have strong leaders and support the development of a leadership pipeline that is equally distributed across a diverse state. Policymakers have begun to investigate the supply and equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers, largely because evidence shows that poor and minority students are less likely to encounter highly experienced teachers. The same question must be asked of the distribution and supply of highly qualified leaders. There are pockets of leader excellence across the state, both urban and rural. Georgia has several opportunities to ensure that every district has a focused, innovative leader able to set a positive culture of learning and student success.

### **ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION**

#### **Develop a comprehensive, statewide plan to support the recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development of leaders.**

- Leverage already existing successful leadership programs.
- Use innovation funds to replicate successful models.

#### **Address leadership turnover.**

- Go beyond just recruiting and training future leaders.
- Address school and climate issues to attract and retain talented teachers and leaders.

### **YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE**

#### **Implement and fully support the recommendations concerning leader development in The Georgia Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds Act plan.**

- Focus on the importance of building leader capacity through expanded professional learning and supports.
- Address the equitable distribution of teachers and leaders throughout the state.
- Use the P-20 regional collaboratives to coordinate opportunities for ongoing job-embedded, sustainable professional learning across the career continuum from induction to retirement.

### **GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE**

#### **Continue the current leader training, certification, and professional development reforms.**

- The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has been actively increasing the rigor around program and licensure requirements and university-district partnerships focused on developing mentors and district need alignment.
- Continue evaluating best practices in a high-quality course of study, including practical on-the-job experiences, clinical studies, mentorships, and similar modes of learning.