

## New Leaders, Inc.

# Aspiring Principals Program

## DOES THE ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PROGRAM IMPROVE SCHOOL AND STUDENT OUTCOMES?

### Project Overview

#### THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

Principals can have a large impact on the outcomes of their students, especially in high-needs schools, by hiring effective teachers, establishing high expectations among teachers, and providing feedback and support. However, despite the evidence of the impact a strong principal can have on student outcomes, schools often turn their focus to teachers. New Leaders, Inc. created the Aspiring Principals program in 2001 to “ensure high academic achievement for all children, especially students in poverty and students of color, by developing transformational school leaders and advancing the policies and practices that allow great leaders to succeed.”<sup>1</sup> New Leaders made major changes to the program in 2012 by creating a new pathway for admission and revising the residency experience to be more structured, and by restructuring principal induction support through a professional-learning-community approach.

#### THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

Researchers compared students who attended schools that had a principal who attended the Aspiring Principals program in 2012-2013 and had been hired as a principal in the 2013-2014 school year to students in schools that did not have a principal who attended the Aspiring Principals program. The evaluation compared student outcomes along with participants’ and districts’ satisfaction with the Aspiring Principals program. Researchers analyzed the outcomes of schools in 13 different school districts, all of which had at least one principal that had been through the program and at the school for more than three years.

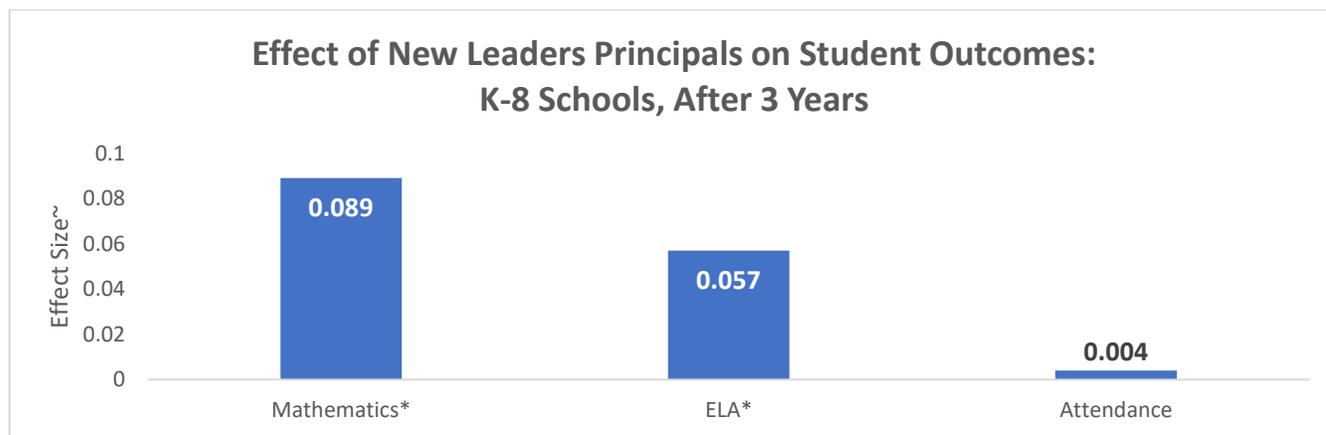
<sup>1</sup> New Leaders, Inc. received an i3 validation grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Investing in Innovation program through Grant Number U411B120026.

## THE ASPIRING PRINCIPALS MODEL

- **Strong Program-District-Partnership.** New Leaders works with districts on recruitment, residency placements, and district-specific training needs. New Leaders also tracks placement of program graduates and requests feedback regarding their performance.
- **Selective application.** New Leaders has an extensive application process, including a national recruitment and admissions process, a set of admission activities, and a Finalist Selection Day of virtual interviews, and in some cases an in-person interview.
- **Data use for continuous improvement.** New Leaders had established routines for collecting program-effectiveness information and used data to adjust the curriculum and program structure. New Leaders sets high, outcome-oriented standards; monitors performance against those standards; and modifies the program as needed in response to the performance data.
- **Experiential learning.** Program participants attend a summer program, in-person group training, followed by a year-long residency under a mentor principal at a New Leadership partner district.
- **Alignment to Research-Based Standards.** The program structure and curriculum aligned to a research-based conceptual framework, the Transformational Leadership Framework. The framework outlines what New Leaders identified as key school practices that resulted in dramatic achievement gains.
- **Training and endorsement.** Effective principal-preparation programs also provide participants with learning experiences that expose them to problems often faced in school leadership roles, with the intent to build practical and technical knowledge. Learning experiences were scaffolded, moving from classroom or online learning simulations to internship experiences, where participants lead all or a significant portion of a school's operations, including activities related to instructional leadership.
- **On-the-job support after program completion.** New Leaders provided on-the-job support—in the form of mentoring, coaching, or peer networking for program graduates who are hired as principals for at least one year after graduation.

## Summary of Results

### DOES THE ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PROGRAM IMPROVE SCHOOL AND STUDENT OUTCOMES?



\*Results are statistically significant

~Education researchers generally interpret effect sizes as follows: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, and 0.8 = large. If the impact does not have an effect size of 0.2 or greater, it is not meaningful, even if it is statistically significant.<sup>2</sup>

- **Elementary and middle schools led by program principals showed gains in achievement skills.** Students in K–8 schools led by New Leaders principals outperformed comparison students in K–8 schools led by other new principals on state achievement tests. Students who attended a school with a New Leaders principal had higher achievement in both mathematics (3.55 percentile points higher) and English Language Arts (ELA) scores (2.27 percentile points) found using standardized tests. Researchers did not find statistically significant effects for high schools with a New Leaders principal.
- **Schools led by program principals showed gains in attendance.** Individual-level student attendance was higher for students who attended K–8 schools with a New Leaders principal. Students who attended schools led by a New Leaders principal had slightly higher attendance, but findings were not statistically significant. Researchers found a negative, but not significant, relationship between attendance in high schools with a New Leaders principal compared to those without a New Leaders principal.
- **Program principals had less turnover.** New principals who completed the Aspiring Principals program were eight percentage points more likely than other new principals in the same districts to remain at their schools as principals for a second year, a statistically significant finding.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 155-159.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Arts Achieve addressed some of the following program implementation challenges to ensure student success:

- **The evaluators did not randomly assign principals.** Principals were not randomly assigned to schools, and there may be differences in where New Leaders principals and non-New Leaders principals are placed. So, while researchers took measures to match comparable schools to each other, there may be unobservable differences that could impact the differences in school outcomes that are unrelated to the principals.
- **Unclear what parts of the program were effective.** The Aspiring Principals program had several features, and the evaluation examined school and student outcomes, so it is unclear what parts of the program had the most impact on students.

## For More Information

### Evaluation Reports

[Preparing School Leaders for Success](#) (RAND, 2019)<sup>3</sup>

### Additional Reports

[The Research Behind Untapped](#) (New Leaders, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> The information and data for this result summary was collected from the most recent report as of 01/29/2020: RAND. (2019). *Preparing School Leaders for Success: Evaluation of New Leaders' Aspiring Principals Program*. Retrieved from [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2812.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2812.html)

## Appendix A: Students Served by the Project<sup>4</sup>

GRADE(S)													
PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

### GENDER

### RACE/ETHNICITY

### COMMUNITY

Not Reported

Not Reported

Not Reported

### HIGH-NEED STUDENTS<sup>i</sup>

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

<sup>4</sup>These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

## Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology<sup>5</sup>

### RESEARCH DESIGN:

<b>Design:</b>	Quasi-Experimental Design
<b>Approach:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researchers included data from schools that had a principal who had gone through the Aspiring Principals program, and created a matched sample with schools similar, using propensity score matching. Evaluators only used schools that had an Aspiring Principal program attendee who had been at their school for at least three years and were matched with a school that had hired a principal in the same year. Schools were matched on school data and New Leaders data.</li> </ul>
<b>Study Length:</b>	Two years

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

<b>Study Setting:</b>	Nine urban and suburban school districts: Baltimore City Public Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Chicago Public Schools, District of Columbia Public Charter Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools, New York City Department of Education, Oakland Unified School District, Prince George's County Public Schools, Shelby County School
<b>Final Sample Sizes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>244 New Leaders principals out of nine school districts in urban and suburban areas</li> <li>Less than 244 non-New Leaders principals out of nine school districts in urban and suburban areas that did receive a New Leaders principal<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Intervention and Comparison Group Characteristics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not reported</li> </ul>
<b>Data Sources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District data on students, schools, and principals</li> <li>New Leaders program data</li> <li>INSPIRE survey data (a national survey)</li> <li>Interview and archival data</li> </ul>
<b>Key Measures:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ELA standardized test scores</li> <li>Mathematics standardized test scores</li> <li>Attendance records</li> <li>Retention of New Leaders as principals in their schools</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

<sup>6</sup> The study does specify how many principals were in the comparison group, but said researchers used a "replaceable sample."

## Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

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### WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW<sup>7</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/29/2020	N/A

### EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW<sup>8</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/29/2020	N/A

### NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW<sup>9</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/29/2020	N/A

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<sup>7</sup> <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://intensiveintervention.org/>

# Investing in Innovation (i3) Grantee Results Summary

Validation, 2012-2017

The [\*Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)\*](#), established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.

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<sup>i</sup> “High-need student” refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: [\*Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 \(April 25, 2016\)\*](#).