

# Policy Advocacy for the School Principals our Students Deserve



Paul Manna

Isabelle and Jerome E. Hyman Distinguished University Professor of Government

Director, Public Policy Program

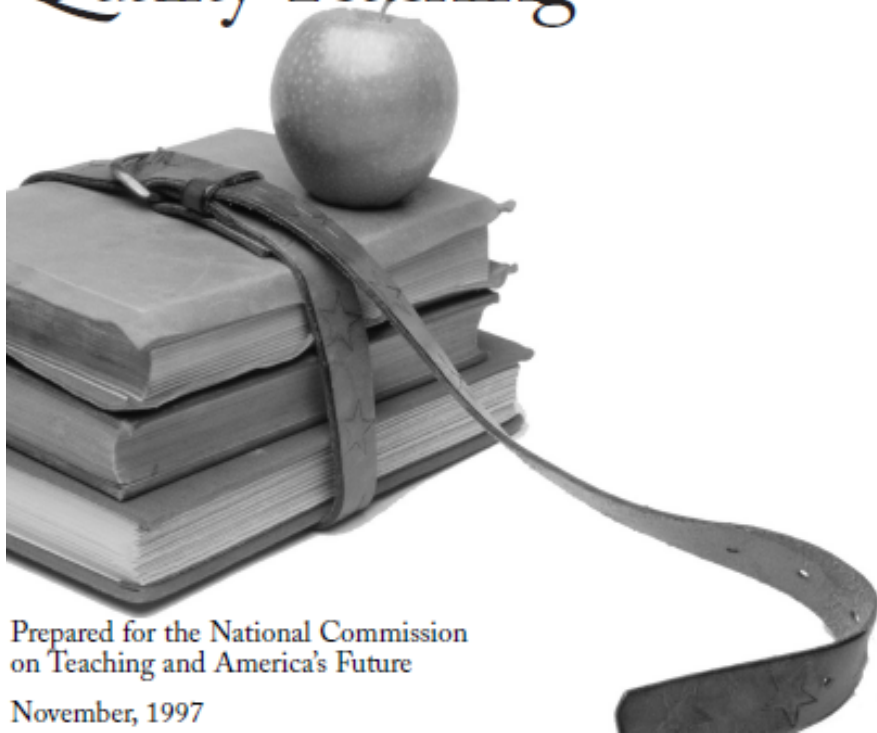
William & Mary

<http://pmanna.people.wm.edu> / [pmanna@wm.edu](mailto:pmanna@wm.edu)

Plenary presentation for The Education Trust virtual bootcamp.  
“Equity Matters: Reimagine, Rethink, Rebuild.” October 13, 2021.

1. Principals appear low on education policy and advocacy agendas, especially compared to teachers.

Doing What  
Matters Most:  
Investing in  
Quality Teaching



Prepared for the National Commission  
on Teaching and America's Future  
November, 1997



The Education Trust

Publications

N=198 total publications available  
as of October 2021

Search “teacher” N = 52

Search “principal” N = 9

<https://edtrust.org/our-resources/publications/>

2. Principals merit attention from policymakers and advocates interested in student success and equity.

## The work of principals increasingly touches *all* core school activities, including those that have big implications for equity.

% of U.S. principals reporting “a great deal” or “major” influence in their schools over...

	1987	1990	1993	1999	2003	2007	2011
<b>Traditional tasks</b>							
Budget / school spending	--	--	32.7	47.4	67.0	71.3	61.8
Setting discipline policy	45.5	54.1	57.4	67.8	87.3	88.5	78.7
Hiring teachers	49.4	57.8	62.0	74.6	88.6	91.3	86.6
In-service teacher training	--	--	34.4	41.3	68.6	75.2	70.2
<b>Reform-oriented tasks</b>							
Setting student performance standards	--	--	--	35.1	52.8	61.4	72.7
Evaluating teachers	--	--	80.7	78.8	93.0	94.6	95.1
Establishing curriculum	23.6	21.8	21.6	31.8	52.6	57.3	44.3

Source: Manna (2015). <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/developing-excellent-school-principals.aspx>.

## Principals have powerful effects on student achievement.

Average increase in student achievement associated with:	Math	Reading
Moving from a teacher at the 25th percentile of teacher effectiveness to one at the 75th percentile	0.23 SD $\approx$ 3.7 months of learning	0.17 SD $\approx$ 3.8 months of learning
	<i>Averaged across all students in the teacher's classroom</i>	
Moving from a principal at the 25th percentile of principal effectiveness to one at the 75th percentile	0.18 SD $\approx$ 2.9 months of learning	0.12 SD $\approx$ 2.7 months of learning
	<i>Averaged across all students in the principal's school</i>	

**Notes:** SD = standard deviation. Teacher effects estimates based on Hanushek and Rivkin (2010). The months-of-learning conversions are based on gains for the typical fifth-grader reported in Bloom et al. (2008), using assumptions explained on page 41 and in endnote 10.

Source: Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021). <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/news-and-media/press-releases/pages/investing-in-principals-offers-very-large-payoffs-for-students-and-teachers-major-new-research-review-finds.aspx>.

## **Principal turnover disproportionately affects students of color...**

*Principal turnover is more frequent in schools with more students of color, more low-income students, and low or declining student performance. Given the negative impacts of principal turnover, high principal churn in schools with larger populations of historically marginalized students and greater performance challenges is an important, largely unrecognized issue for educational equity.*  
(p. 53)

**...but hiring and retaining principals of color can improve the chances of those same students succeeding.**

*The presence of a principal of color appears to lead to more frequent hiring and retention of teachers of color and better outcomes for students of color, including higher math scores and higher likelihood of placement into gifted programs.*  
(p. 47)

Source: Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021). <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/news-and-media/press-releases/pages/investing-in-principals-offers-very-large-payoffs-for-students-and-teachers-major-new-research-review-finds.aspx>.

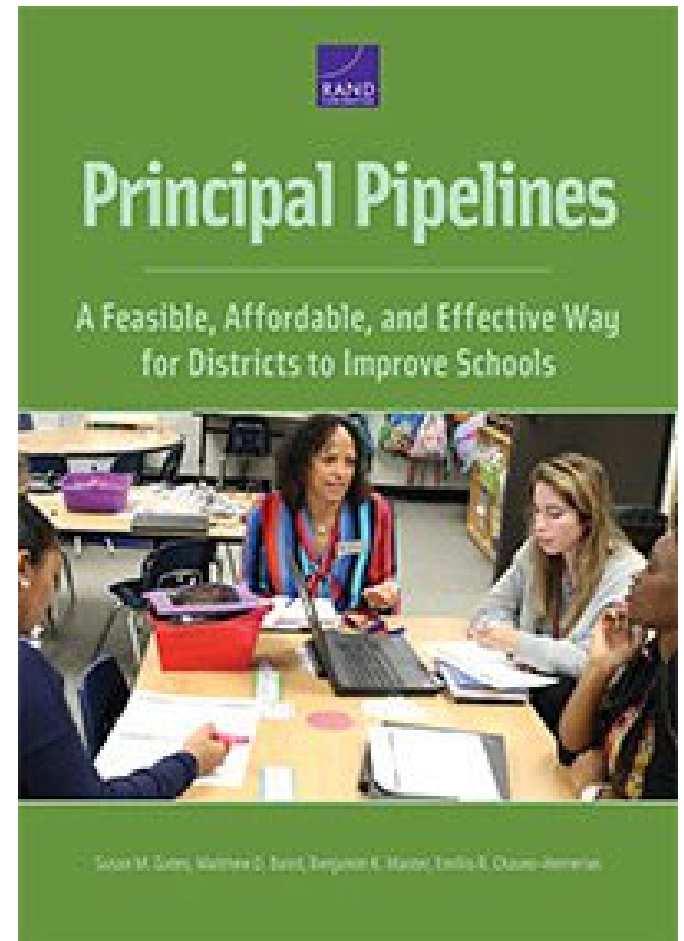
**Strategic development of principals can have broad, positive impacts on students and schools at relatively low cost compared to other educational interventions.**

Evidence from Wallace Foundation  
Principal Pipeline Initiative districts

Feasible: Districts operated pipelines at scale.

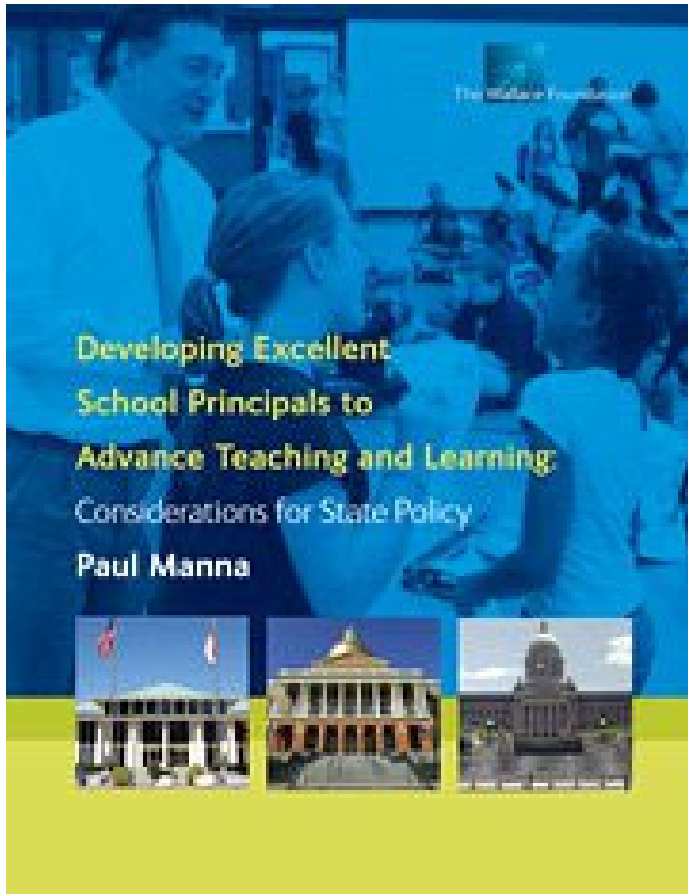
Effective: Districts saw gains in: student achievement, especially in the lowest performing schools; principal retention; principal ratings of hiring, evaluation, and support.

Affordable: Less than ½ percent of district budgets were required to operate and enhance pipelines.



Source: Gates, et al. (2019).  
[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2666.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2666.html)

3. Numerous state policy levers exist that can advance principals' development, can work in concert with federal policy like ESSA, and can promote equity.



Setting principal standards

Recruiting aspiring principals

Overseeing principal preparation programs

Licensing principals

Principal professional development

Evaluating principals



Don't hesitate to contact me  
to continue the conversation.



## Paul Manna

Isabelle and Jerome E. Hyman Distinguished  
University Professor of Government

Director, Public Policy Program

William & Mary

[pmanna@wm.edu](mailto:pmanna@wm.edu)

<http://pmanna.people.wm.edu>

tel: 757-221-3024