

Improving school leadership is topic of guide for education officials

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As state and local school leaders consider efforts to improve student learning under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, a new report by the RAND Corporation offers guidance for promoting effective school leadership as a strategy for success.

The [report](#) describes the opportunities for supporting school leadership and discusses the standards of evidence required for federal funding under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The report also provides a synthesis of the evidence about the effectiveness of school leadership interventions, identifies activities that should be allowable under the Every Student Succeeds Act, and offers guidance to educators and policymakers on the use of research-based practices in school leadership.

"Research shows that school leadership can have an important effect on student achievement, and new federal rules offer states and school districts greater flexibility about how to use federal funds to strengthen school leadership," said Rebecca Herman, the study's lead author and a senior policy researcher at RAND, a nonprofit research organization. "But using this flexibility effectively requires an understanding of the evidence requirements and how to apply them to school leadership initiatives."

Research suggests that school leadership can be a powerful driver of improved educational outcomes, with research suggesting that principals

are second only to teachers as the most important school-level determinant of [student achievement](#).

School leadership is explicitly acknowledged as a valid target of educational-improvement activities in the Every Student Succeeds Act and the RAND report provides analysis of how Every Student Succeeds Act can further opportunities to improve school leadership.

Potential steps include the support of school improvement programs that have strong leadership components and efforts to strengthen steps in the principal pipeline, such as preparation programs, certification, professional development, and recruitment and placement.

In implementing school improvement efforts such as school leadership, federally funded interventions require the use of evidence-based activities. The report examines the four tiers of evidence established in the Every Student Succeeds Act to guide educators and policymakers in their efforts to identify and use effective programs.

The report offers specific examples and analysis of school leadership improvement efforts that meet federal requirements, including school leadership evaluations, principal preparation programs, strategic staff management, professional learning opportunities, working conditions and comprehensive school improvement models.

"The Every Student Succeeds Act presents a significant moment in time for states and districts to use evidence in efforts to improve schools, and this new RAND report details the wealth of evidence behind many [school leadership](#) activities," said Will Miller, president of The Wallace Foundation, which provided funding for the report. "Improving leadership can be an essential ingredient in enabling states and districts to be able to implement all of ESSA effectively, and we hope states and districts find this new report a valuable resource to do that."

The report, "School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review," is available at <http://www.rand.org>. Other authors of the study are Susan Gates, Aziza Arifkhanova, Andriy Bega, Emilio R. Chavez-Herrerias, Eugene Han, Mark Harris, Jennifer Tamargo and Stephani Wrabel.

Provided by RAND Corporation

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