5. TRACKING PARTICIPANT JOB PLACEMENT AND RETENTION

High quality evaluation of principal preparation programs examines inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. These components are depicted in the evaluation pathway framework below.

Evaluation Pathway for Leadership Preparation Programs (adapted from UCEA, 2013):

Participant Characteristics	Program Implementation	Participant Learning and Program Completion	Participant Job Placement and Career Advancement	Leadership Practices	School and Teacher Outcomes	Student Outcomes
Inputs	Processes		Outputs		Outcomes	

This paper is part of a series documenting lessons learned by New Leaders in utilizing this framework to guide internal evaluation of its Aspiring Principals Program (APP). The paper focuses on the fourth step in the pathway, participant job placement and career trajectory.

 Tracking principal placements serves two important functions in leadership preparation program evaluations. First, since preparation programs are designed to prepare program participants for leadership roles, the extent to which graduates enter and are retained in those leadership roles is an important output of the program. Second, tracking principal placements is critical to measuring other outcomes like student achievement because it identifies which schools should be included in those analyses. Tracking placements can also help to maintain alumni relations.

Important variables for programs to track on graduates and alumni include:
  • Type of role (whether at school or district level)
  • Type of school
  • Length of tenure
  • Retention
  • Length of time between program completion and placement in leadership position

Indicators and placement results should be aligned with the program's design assumptions. For example, the New Leaders program is designed and marketed to prepare graduates to immediately enter the principalship. Therefore, we might have higher expectations for immediate placement into the principal

role than a program that is designed to prepare graduates to enter the assistant principal role before being promoted to the principalship.

 Although we recommend that states track and make placement data available to preparation programs, these data currently are not typically available publicly. Our external evaluator, the RAND Corporation, collects placement information from our partner school districts, but this data acquisition process can be time consuming, the data are often inaccurate, and RAND does not collect the data every year from every partner (Burkhauser et al., 2012). We therefore have to rely on our own data collection. New Leaders delegates the task of tracking placements to local program offices. These local offices use a variety of tactics, but they often begin with district lists of principals and update those lists based on their ongoing communication with participants, surveys to participants, district websites, social media, and/or calling schools to confirm information. Although New Leaders is able to track placements for 92% of its graduates, this work requires a significant investment of staff time across the organization not only for initial updates at the beginning of the school year but also to continuously update over the course of the year.

SUMMARY OF THE NEW LEADERS APPROACH TO TRACKING GRADUATE PLACEMENT

The following chart summarizes the indicators and data sources that New Leaders uses to track graduate job placements. We also use these placements to then calculate retention rates.

Placement Variables	Indicators Used by NL	Data Sources Used by NL
Role	• Assistant Principal • District/CMO Superintendent • Formally Exited Program • Functional Principal • Non-Leader Education field • Other District/CMO Leader • Other field • Other Non-School Based Education Leader • Other School-Based Leader • Principal in Planning • Principal Manager • Principal of Record • Resident • Unemployed • Deceased • Unknown	Local program teams • State and district records • Graduate surveys • Phone calls to schools • Social media • Communication with graduates
Type of placement	• Charter vs. district • Grade levels served • Parent organization (District or CMO)	Publically available school data
Retention / Tenure	Analysis of role data over time	Salesforce

New Leaders tracks graduate and alumni career trajectory information in Salesforce. This electronic database allows the organization to build a comprehensive record of program graduate placements that is used to conduct analyses for various stakeholders. The database also allows New Leaders to merge placement data with other outcomes databases (like the longitudinal student achievement database).

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RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON LESSONS LEARNED

Tracking initial placement is critical for determining initial placement rates, but placements need to be continuously tracked over time to determine retention rates. Recommendations based on New Leaders' experiences regarding tracking participant job placement and career trajectory are:

- Make **design assumptions** about intended graduate job placement explicit. For example, does the program intend for graduates to immediately enter the principalship?

- **Invest in data systems** with the necessary identifiers that will allow programs to link participant placement and career trajectories with other data sources and outcomes.

- **Define the leadership roles that should be tracked**. Consider all the ways that you might want to analyze results (e.g., if you will want to determine how many graduates are in central office roles that manage principals vs. other types of central office roles - then the placement role categories should be defined accordingly). Ensure that any tracking mechanisms allow for capturing the subtleties/complexities of principal placement (e.g., functional principals, principals who are responsible for only a subset of grades).

- **Track the school and school type** in which graduates are placed (e.g., charter versus district, grade levels).

- **Establish consistent policies** regarding determining what leadership roles will be included in various analyses. For example, programs may wish to include program graduates who have assumed the role of principal while not the official principal of record (functional principal) in student achievement analyses, while excluding assistant principals (APs), as APs do not have the same sphere of influence in schools as a functional principal.

- Plan ahead for **strategies to maintain contact with program completers**:
  - Set expectations in a written contract that the program completers will provide updates on placement.
  - Set expectations with district/CMO partners to provide updates.
  - Strategize timing of updates: fall for up-to-date placement results; spring for school/student outcome results.

REFERENCES

Burkhauser, S., Pierson, A., Gates, S. M., & Hamilton, L. S. (2012). *Addressing challenges in evaluating school principal improvement efforts*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

University Council for Educational Administration. (2013). *Developing evaluation evidence: A formative and summative evaluation planner for educational leadership preparation programs.* Charlottesville, VA: Author.

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