The Research Behind

UNTAPPED

An Evaluation of New Leaders’ Emerging Leaders Program

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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 4

Introduction: The Need for Teacher Leader Development .............................................. 6

The Design Model of the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) ......................................... 10

Research Base for the Emerging Leaders Program Design ........................................ 21

Empirically Examining ELP for Evidence of Effectiveness:
The Research Study Methodology ....................................................................................... 24

Emerging Leaders Program’s Research-Based Findings .............................................. 27

Factors that Enabled or Hindered Effective Implementation of ELP ...................... 33

Conclusions and Recommendations for Teacher Leadership Development ........ 36

References .......................................................................................................................... 39
Executive Summary

Across the education field, there is unusual consensus that strong teacher leaders are key to improving our nation’s schools. Unfortunately, clear expectations for what teacher leaders should do, and strategies to prepare them to do it, are few and far between. A recent survey found that while 86 percent of urban school districts have teacher leader roles, only 32 percent offered specialized training for teachers stepping into those roles (Council of Great City Schools, 2015).

Assigning teachers to leadership roles without quality training does a double disservice: It takes teaching time away from the educators best prepared to accelerate student learning, and then fails to equip them with the skills they need to lead colleagues to similar success.

New Leaders developed the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP)—a leadership development program that provides job-embedded training and coaching to teacher leaders, assistant principals, and coaches—to address this problem. ELP was launched in 2011 and has since been implemented in 13 districts and charter management organizations. This report, The Research Behind Untapped, shares evidence from an evaluation of its first two years, as well as detailed information on program design and research methodology.

This evaluation research was funded by a federal i3 grant. In conducting this study, New Leaders sought to determine whether ELP met its objectives of increasing educators’ knowledge and skills in order to serve as effective teacher leaders. The findings reflect the second cohort of ELP, with 315 participants in the 2012-13 school year. Data sources included survey data from participants, scored internal assessment data, publicly available state assessment data, and other internal program data.
Our findings indicate that well-designed leadership training can enable teacher leaders to increase academic achievement and bolster leadership capacity at their schools. Specifically, we find:

- **Teacher leaders can immediately boost student learning in their schools.** Some 70 percent of participants led gains in student achievement across classrooms they supervised during their training year.

- **Teacher leaders can quickly develop and apply critical leadership skills.** Participants made significant, measurable progress toward mastery of high-impact skills, such as using student data and coaching to improve instruction.

- **Teacher leaders can fill gaps in the leadership pipeline.** After one year of Emerging Leaders, 80 percent of participants who were accepted to a principal apprenticeship started that training having already mastered core leadership skills.

ELP is a work in process and we continue to make adjustments to its design and delivery in response to participant feedback and program outcomes. Based on these ongoing observations and analyses, we offer the following recommendations for providers of teacher leadership training programs:

- **Concentrate on leadership practices relevant to teacher leaders’ scope of influence.** Leadership programs should focus on cultivating skills within participants’ realm of influence and relevant to their current position. Once they develop those skills with a teacher leadership focus, they can opt to build on that foundation incrementally to broader leadership responsibilities.

- **Maintain a strong focus on instructional leadership.** To ensure that teacher leaders are prepared to help schools meet the challenge of more rigorous academic standards, leadership programs should make instructional expertise a significant criterion in selection and concentrate on developing participants’ ability to cultivate strong instructional practice in others.

- **Emphasize practice and feedback.** Leadership programs should minimize lecture-based learning and instead be structured so that participants develop skills through school-based activities and assignments, real-world practice leading a team of teachers, and personalized feedback from expert coaches.

While we are still at the outset of this work, we are sharing our research findings and design decisions to foster more widespread implementation of effective teacher leadership development strategies—particularly job-embedded, feedback-rich programs—that develop teacher leaders in a scalable, sustainable way. It is our hope that districts, CMOs, and service providers might adopt elements of ELP design into their current practice as a means of deepening the experiences and training for teacher leaders and thereby improving educational opportunities for all children.
Teacher leaders are critical to school improvement. Research has demonstrated that effective teacher leaders can substantially advance student learning (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010; Marsh, McCombs & Martorell, 2012). For example, a three-year, quasi-experimental study by Biancarosa and colleagues (2010) found that schools with school-based instructional coaches made 32 percent larger learning gains after three years of implementation than during the baseline year. There are several ways teacher leaders strengthen their schools from the inside, including distributing leadership, retaining effective teachers, maximizing expertise, and elevating instruction.

- **Distributing leadership:** Teacher leaders are integral to a distributive leadership model, in which responsibility is diffused from resting solely on principals and administrators. This generates greater buy-in and success of new initiatives. Research supports the effectiveness of distributed leadership, showing it increases academic achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009), bolsters teachers’ skills and confidence in reaching goals (Harris, 2004), and improves facilitation practices (Hohenbrink, Stauffer, Zigler & Ulenhake, 2011). A distributive leadership model helps reduce principal burnout by taking some of the load off of principals’ backs, leading to sustain-ability of enterprises (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

- **Retaining effective teachers:** Teachers’ job satisfaction is at a 25-year low, with only 39 percent of teachers very satisfied with their job as a teacher in public schools (MetLife, 2013). This is not surprising given that teachers—compared to professionals from other fields—historically have been provided with limited opportunities for personal growth and development over the course of their career (Sprinthall, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1993). As a result, the profession suffers high rates of turnover, particularly in high-needs schools where low-income students are more likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzuo, 2009). Teachers cite poor working conditions in their decisions to leave, including weak school leadership and lack of participation in decision-making (Ingersoll, 2003). More than half of teachers leaving the profession cite a lack of advancement and desire for more authority over their work (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek & Morton, 2006).

- **Elevating quality of instruction:** Teacher leaders can substantially improve student achievement by working with other teachers—observing, modeling, and providing feedback (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Rockoff, 2008). Master teachers can be a resource for advice and counsel in pursuit of improved instructional practice (Darling-Hammond, 1998), with particularly strong and persistent gains for less-experienced teachers (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009).
Most schools have some sort of teacher leader role, but few have clear pathways and quality training to prepare educators for success in those roles.


Teacher leaders are also critical to building a robust leadership pipeline. Time and time again, research confirms that principals are key to transforming struggling schools and advancing student learning (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Strong principals are capable of building thriving schools where teachers grow and students excel. Indeed, the influence of an individual principal can be quite substantial (Branch et al., 2012), especially in low-performing schools, where improvement does not occur without strong leadership (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Louis et al., 2010). Half of principals are not retained after their third year on the job (School Leaders Network, 2014). When principals turnover, the school is more likely to experience dips in student achievement than when a principal is retained (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012). This problem is even more dire in the United States’ 6,000 high-poverty schools, which are disproportionately likely to be led by inexperienced or temporary principals.

Despite the documented importance of school leadership, school systems often lack a strong pipeline for future principals (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). This problem is in part because school systems often fail to provide opportunities for teacher leaders to grow their leadership skills on the job. Too often, a school leader’s first experience managing adults occurs when they assume the principalship, at which point they immediately begin managing large numbers of adults. In the most recent MetLife survey, 84 percent of teachers said they were either “not very” or “not at all” interested in becoming a principal. Most teachers do not want to pursue leadership roles because of perceptions of overly burdensome paperwork and distance from students (Hancock, Black, & Bird, 2006). However, the same MetLife survey found that nearly 25 percent of teachers were interested in a hybrid role combining teaching and some sort of leadership position.

The education system has failed to invest in purposeful and high-quality teacher leadership development. There are limited examples of districts providing purposeful teacher leadership development opportunities. One recent survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools found that among its members, 86 percent of schools had teacher leader roles, but just 32 percent offered specialized training for teachers stepping into those roles. Programs that do exist often lack authentic, on-the-job leadership practice, such as taking leadership of a school grade level or department, and receiving coaching and feedback in that role. Research shows that adults learn best when learning is rooted in opportunities to practice authentic learning activities—coherent, meaningful, and purposeful events (Brown, Collins, & Dugrid, 1989) connected to real-life tasks (Rogoff, 1990; Salomon & Perkins, 1988) and the adults’ current environment (Lieb, 1991). Despite this knowledge base, teacher leadership development tends to consist of off-site trainings or one-off workshops that are generally disconnected from critical practice and feedback opportunities.

The education system has also failed to provide teacher leaders with opportunities that specifically develop their ability to lead adults. Supporting changes in colleagues’ instructional practice requires not only content expertise, but also skills that motivate and facilitate adult learning (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010). In fact, Marsh and colleagues (2012) found that principal and teachers reported in surveys that a reading coach’s ability to work with adult learners was more important than or as important as their content or pedagogical expertise. These skills differ from leading students in the classroom (Hohenbrink et al., 2011) and require purposeful training. Being able to effectively coach on pedagogical practices requires understanding of how to coach adults and increase instructional skill in fellow classroom teachers (Marsh et al., 2012). Learn-
ING how to support colleagues through various activities of teacher leadership may be of similar importance to learning how to teach students (Gibson, 2006); both require thoughtful training. Yet, relatively few programs exist that focus on developing teacher leaders’ adult leadership skills.

**A promising teacher leadership development approach: the Emerging Leaders Program.**

The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP), launched by New Leaders in 2011, was designed to provide an effective, practice-based program for teacher leadership development. The program cultivates the skills teacher leaders need to be successful in improving colleagues’ instructional performance through real-world practice leading teams of teachers in their schools. The program’s learning cycle (explained in more detail below) minimizes theoretical study. Instead, the program includes ample opportunities for authentic practice and continuous feedback in small group settings and at the school site. Participants master the essential adult leadership and culture-change skills they need whether they aspire to the principalship or want to lead while remaining closer to the classroom. By providing authentic assignments aligned with the needs of the school, ELP enables participants to bolster their teacher team’s instructional practice and advance student achievement even during the program’s training year. In this way, ELP transforms great teachers into high-impact instructional leaders who can move colleagues toward excellence in their own classrooms for many years to come.

This report presents findings from an evaluation of ELP supported by funds from an Investing in Innovation (i3) grant. The following sections provide an in-depth understanding of the Emerging Leaders Program design, supporting research, program data, and evidence from an evaluation study that supports the effectiveness of ELP while suggesting opportunities to further refine and improve the model. Most importantly, this report provides key findings and implications from ELP that can inform future teacher leadership development programs nationwide, whether they are operated by schools, districts, or institutions of higher learning.
With a focus on teacher leadership, ELP helps schools build a pipeline of well-prepared leaders with diverse backgrounds and expertise.

During the 2012-13 school year, 315 participants nationwide included:

- **Gender**
  - Female: 75%
  - Male: 20%
  - N/A: 5%

- **Ethnicity**
  - African American: 55%
  - White: 25%
  - Hispanic: 5%
  - Asian: 3%
  - Multiracial: 3%
  - N/A: 7%

- **Grade Level Taught**
  - Elementary: 41%
  - Middle school: 15%
  - K-8: 23%
  - Secondary: 20%
  - K-12: 2%

- **Type of School**
  - District: 86%
  - Charter: 12%
  - Other: 2%

- **STEM**
  - Teacher: 64%

Enrollment data from the 2012-13 school year. Some percentages do not add to 100 due to incomplete demographic data.

Source: New Leaders.
ELP operates on a monthly learning cycle that includes learning new material, applying new information in authentic settings, receiving feedback on those applications, and integrating feedback and new content into practice. By combining instruction with practice and execution, ELP is designed to reinforce important leadership skills among participants and bring improvement to struggling schools in real-time. The use of technology—such as virtual learning sessions to complement in-person sessions and feedback on videotaped practice instead of costly site visits—reduces expenses and makes scaling the program financially feasible.

**ELP’s Underlying Framework & Structure**

ELP was designed to improve participants’ leadership skills so they can immediately contribute to their schools while remaining in their current role and practicing the skills necessary to enter more intensive principal preparation programs later in their careers, if they wish. To that end, ELP content is based on New Leaders’ research-based Transformational Leadership Framework™ (TLF), which has identified areas of leadership needed to improve student achievement in under-performing urban schools (Desravines & Fenton, 2015). These areas are known internally as the program standards, or selection standards, and outline what participants need to know and be able to do in positions of leadership. New Leaders’ program standards are also aligned with ISLLC standards and Wallace Foundation research (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). ELP content, including job-embedded practice opportunities and assessments, focuses on developing participants’ proficiency in alignment with those research-based standards. The standards (outlined in the side bar) emphasize the most important competencies for teacher leaders both in terms of providing effective teacher leadership, and in serving as the first step in the principal pipeline.

ELP does not address all of the TLF or ISLLC standards; it purposely focuses on the elements that are appropriate for the scope of the teacher leader role, as opposed to the principal role. ELP’s standards of focus are personal leadership (particularly 1.a. and 1.b.), culture leadership and adult and team leadership (particularly 4.b. and 4.c.). Adult and team leadership capabilities are critical, yet are not often covered in other teacher leadership programs (Hohenbrink et al., 2011; Marsh et al., 2012). New Leaders purposefully cultivates adult leadership capacity and adapts concepts for optimal adult learning by requiring all participants to lead teams of two to seven teachers in their schools as a core component of their training.

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1 The Transformational Leadership Framework™ (TLF), formerly known as the Urban Excellence Framework™, was developed based on a comprehensive research review and visits to more than 100 rapidly improving schools serving low-income students. The TLF (UEF) has been independently validated by researchers at Johns Hopkins University: Hutchins, D.J., Epstein, J.L., & Sheldon, S.B. (2012). Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC): How do principals’ report of leadership practices reflect UEF categories, levers, and concepts?

2 The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards can be found online at http://coe.fgcu.edu/faculty/valesky/isllcstandards.htm
ELP begins with New Leaders admitting candidates through a rigorous and selective multi-step admissions process. Once accepted, participants commit to job-embedded work that strengthens their leadership skills through a combination of virtual and in-person sessions led by highly-trained ELP Directors, school-based projects where they apply what they learn, and feedback from peers and Directors. The program work generally translates to 15 hours of work a month beyond participants’ school jobs. A key aspect of ELP is that the program is embedded into teachers’ work—the additive portion is intended to be minimal.

As demonstrated in Figure 3, the learning cycle begins with the introduction of new content via formal training. Following the content’s introduction, Emerging Leaders are then given the opportunity to practice with peers during in-person sessions. Emerging Leaders then apply the new content at their school sites, oftentimes while being recorded on video. Next, they bring these experiences (and videos) back to peers and Directors for feedback and guidance. Participants then reflect and incorporate that feedback along with newly acquired knowledge from their studies to ensure continuous development toward mastery.

![Figure 3: The Emerging Leaders Program Learning Cycle](image)

**Source:** New Leaders

**Figure 4:** ELP Admissions, 2012-13

Even with a targeted nomination process, one in three applicants was not admitted to ELP.

- Applicants: 572
- Offered admission: 360
- Started the program: 315

*Source: New Leaders ELP admissions and enrollment data, 2012-13 school year.*
Like teacher leaders, the nation’s assistant principals suffer from a lack of role clarity (Oleszewski, Shoho & Barnett, 2012) and a lack of purposeful training (Council of Great City Schools [CGCS], 2015). Assistant principals are often heavily focused on discipline issues and school climate, with limited focus on instructional leadership (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; CGCS, 2015). Readiness to take on instructional leadership varies across APs, with a third of one study’s sample indicating that they did not feel prepared to take on such duties (Barnett, Shoho & Oleszewski, 2012).

Some districts are beginning to develop assistant principals’ instructional leadership skills through school/district based programs (Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011), but a great need exists to provide purposeful leadership training in instruction and working with adults, particularly in a climate of rising academic standards where more is being asked of teachers and students alike. Since its inception, the Emerging Leaders Program has served not only teacher leaders, but assistant principals as well. ELP’s proportion of APs served has grown steadily over the years, with some partner districts choosing for ELP to focus almost exclusively on developing APs into high-impact instructional leaders.

Without a training program like ELP to bolster APs’ instructional knowledge (and help their principals value them in an instructional leadership role), APs’ career advancement opportunities may be limited. Some studies report that assistant principals do not feel prepared for the instructional responsibilities of the principalship (Kwan, 2009; Madden, 2008). Furthermore, assistant principals report that feeling a lack of experience in instructional areas might be a barrier to becoming a principal (Chan et al., 2003). However, when principals have served as APs, they tend to show greater effectiveness at moving student outcomes (Bastian & Henry, 2014). When assistant principals are well-trained and given opportunities to serve as instructional leaders while in those roles, they are better prepared to become successful principals later in their careers.

### The People Involved

**Participants: Teacher Leaders, Instructional Coaches and Assistant Principals**

The Emerging Leaders Program recruits and matriculates candidates who:

- Currently serve in a school where the principal is committed to giving them significant opportunities to lead a consistent team of adults with a focus on improving instruction and culture. As part of their eligibility, applicants’ supervising principals have to guarantee the participants would have authority to lead a team of two to seven teachers, typically as a grade-level lead or department lead;
- Are viewed as high-quality leadership candidates by their current school, district or charter management organization; and
- Have a strong track record of improving student achievement as a teacher, team lead, leadership team member or assistant principal.

Eligible ELP candidates are invited to participate in a series of admissions activities, including a belief and student achievement results activity, a case study activity, and an instruction activity.

- **Belief and Student Achievement Results Activity:** In this four-part activity, candidates outline their beliefs, examine sample student data, and explain the interpretations and assumptions they draw from that data. The activity is designed to gauge candidates’ personal efficacy in promoting student success by eliciting evidence of specific student results the candidates achieved in their own classrooms. It also provides candidates with the opportunity to share goals they set for their students based on classroom-specific data, and reflect upon their related past actions and next steps.
- **Case Study Activity:** For this admissions activity, candidates are asked to read a two-part scenario and then answer open-ended prompts to demonstrate their approach to problem solving, team leadership, and decision making.
- **Instructional Activity:** The instructional activity directs candidates to watch a video of a teacher and then respond to questions and rate the instruction quality of the featured teacher. The candidates are provided a rubric, which they use to rate the teacher’s classroom management, use of objectives, differentiation, assessments, rigorous questioning and teacher/student talk. Candidates are then asked to recommend high-leverage strategies for improvement. This activity helps gauge candidates’ pedagogy and instructional strategy knowledge.

Overall, these admissions activities are designed to assess a candidate’s skill level as compared against specific components of the New Leaders’ selection standards, or program standards. Local New Leaders city offices have the option to interview candidates for additional insights.

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3 Participants’ school-based roles during ELP did not need to be “formal” leadership roles. Participants did not have to be certified as administrators, nor did they have to be approved teacher evaluators. They could teach a full classroom load. While the majority of participants were teacher leaders, some participants were instructional coaches and assistant principals.
ELP SELECTION CRITERIA

After submitting their admissions application and portfolio, candidates are evaluated to ensure that they demonstrate the following criteria:

- Deep instructional knowledge
- A strong belief that all students can succeed in college and careers
- A track record of strong student achievement results
- The interpersonal skills to build trusting relationships with adults and students in diverse settings
- The desire and potential to influence adult behaviors
- Dedication to forging a school culture that cultivates persistence and love of learning among students
- The confidence to prioritize and problem solve appropriately when confronted with competing priorities

Initially, New Leaders expected that the selection processes (and subsequent program content delivery) would bring candidates into ELP with a certain level of instructional expertise. Through the course of program implementation and continuous improvement initiatives, New Leaders realized that participants needed a higher entering level of instructional expertise and more instructional training to effectively lead (and push) other adults to stronger instructional practice. As a result, recent selection and training of ELP cohorts placed more emphasis on instructional expertise.

Program Directors

Each program city has a New Leaders staff member (Director) who serves as an expert guide and coach, working directly with the Emerging Leaders cohort. The Directors all have significant prior teaching and leadership experience in urban public schools, with a track record of distinguished success in educational and organizational leadership. Furthermore, they all have experience in teaching and leading adults in a school-based setting, and have demonstrated success in delivering high-quality professional development. As ELP Directors, they design and deliver curriculum by facilitating in-person sessions and collaborating with the New Leaders National Program Team to adapt the nationally-developed curriculum to fit the local context as appropriate. The ELP Directors assess and provide feedback on participants’ performance and track participants’ progress to achieving proficiency on all program standards. The program’s design plans for a ratio of 35 Emerging Leaders to one Director.

Teacher Teams

Participants’ authentic practice stems from their on-site work in schools with their teacher teams. At the beginning of the program year, each Emerging Leaders participant identifies at least two (and no more than seven) teachers to serve as members of the teacher team that the participant will lead over the course of the school year. Participants are encouraged to choose a team of teachers who work with a common set of students and subject matter, and whose students take an interim assessment.

Participants work with their host principals to select their teacher teams, ensuring that the Emerging Leaders has the opportunity to:

- Lead the teacher team through a series of school-based projects focused on improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement;
- Facilitate team meetings in which the teachers review student achievement data;
- Conduct professional development with their team;
- Observe and give informal feedback to teachers in one-on-one conversations;
- Videotape their team meetings and their own leadership practice to share with program participants and facilitators.

At the beginning of the year, the teachers sign a formal media release form acknowledging their inclusion in the teacher team and giving consent to be recorded. Throughout the year, teacher teams give formal feedback to participants via a teacher survey distributed during the second half of the school year.

Peer Community

Throughout the course of ELP, participants engage with peers on the national level through the monthly nationally-led webinars (i.e., through a chat-box function) and through the locally delivered in-person sessions (see the next section on learning formats to understand more about the in-person sessions’ two structures: guided practice and feedback). Working with other participants in the in-person sessions facilitates consistent reflection and feedback on practice.
The Content and Practice
Throughout the program year, participants engage with their Directors, teacher teams, and peers through the learning cycle. The program includes a variety of learning formats, curriculum foci, and job-embedded assessments. These aspects of the program are described in greater detail below, complemented with an example of how the program develops the skill of coaching other teachers.

Broad topics of focus:
As indicated by the program standards described above, the program focuses on the research-based Transformational Leadership Framework™, which identifies leadership skills that drive student achievement in urban schools. Therefore, Emerging Leaders’ work emphasizes the four leadership domains of:

• **Personal Leadership**: Receiving feedback and self-reflecting to continuously improve
• **Instructional Leadership**: Setting the expectation that college success is the target, guiding teams through a full data analysis cycle, as well as observing and coaching teachers to improve instruction
• **Culture Leadership**: Building a learning orientation among team members and students who are focused on hard work and personal responsibility for their own development. Creating a set of expectations, incentives, and systems to get a set of behaviors out of adults that builds the culture of effective student achievement
• **Adult Leadership**: Motivating a team to believe in college success for all students—and in the team’s ability to realize this goal—while building trusting relationships, giving constructive feedback, and facilitating effective meetings.

Content focus:
Each month, the learning cycle themes focus on particular program standards and content in order to develop skills in:

• Leading a team through data-driven instruction
• Running effective team meetings
• Setting up team accountability practices
• Supporting teachers to reach their instructional goals
• Building a school culture cultivates persistence and love of learning among students
• Using strategic communication
• Defining, observing, and coaching other teachers to deliver engaging, challenging lessons

Learning mechanisms:
Learning happens through the repeated application of the Learning Cycle components (Figure 3):

• Focus on key leadership actions
• Job-embedded practice happens in real-life school settings
• Leadership skills are built through deep, repeated practice followed by feedback and reflection
• Job-embedded and reflection assessments provide evidence of skill development

Job-embedded assessments:
The assessments used in ELP to gauge teacher leaders’ skill development were developed internally by New Leaders’ assessment experts. Each program year, Directors are normed on scoring the assessments to ensure consistency of evaluation across sites and raters. Specifically, there are three formats of assessments:

• **Practice and Reflection Assignments**: Practice and reflection assignments are the participants’ chance to practice the skills introduced in the webinar and reviewed during the guided practice section of an in-person session. These assignments are not scored. Participants bring their reflection assignments to the feedback portion of in-person sessions to get feedback from peers and Directors. Most of the elements of the practice and reflection assignments parallel the job-embedded assessments, which essentially make them “drafts” for the scored assessments. After receiving feedback on a video, a participant could choose to submit the same video for an assessment but upgrade their reflection. Alternatively, the participant could choose to submit a different video altogether. These assignments allow participants to get feedback in a low-stakes way.

• **Formal Assessments Assignments**: Formal assessments consist of an entry assessment and four assignments. The entry assessment includes a data-driven instruction analysis and a self-assessment of strengths and growth areas measured against the program standards. Emerging Leaders complete the next four assignments with their school-based teacher teams. The assignments are directly linked to core content and formally assessed by Directors, then shared with peers for feedback. The assignments are not just a submission of paper artifacts, as is a common approach to assessments in training programs; rather, these assignments require video-based evidence of skill demonstrated in the schools.

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PRIORITY INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS
The unprecedented challenges and opportunities presented by the introduction of Common Core and similarly rigorous academic standards have raised the bar for instructional leadership across the country. Like educators nationwide, our participants have found these changes daunting, particularly when curriculum updates outpaced training and support.

After taking a hard look at our program data, we found that 45 percent of admitted 2012-13 participants did not meet our proficiency standard for instructional leadership during the selection process, because their strengths in other leadership competencies masked relative weakness in this area. While this was due in part to the exceptionally high bar we had set in anticipation of rising academic standards, we believe that current and future challenges set by new college and career readiness standards make instructional leadership absolutely critical. Therefore, we opted for even greater focus on this area and built into our programs more opportunities to practice instructional leadership skills. Changes include:

• **Selection:** We refined our ELP selection process to give greater weight to applicants’ instructional leadership skills. For example, we look closely for evidence of content expertise and the ability to assess and coach teacher performance toward rigorous instructional standards. We work hand-in-hand with our partners to design a selection model that advances local leadership pipeline priorities, whether that means focusing on candidates with STEM expertise or cultivating a diverse group of highly prepared future leaders.

• **Hands-on practice:** While this has always been a hallmark of our program, we will now spend more time developing instructional leadership—not only through practicing skills related to data-driven instruction, but also through focused mastery of content and teaching techniques. We are also building this priority into our commitment conversations with principals before training begins. We seek out school partners who share a sense of urgency around developing instructional practice, and principals must agree that ELP participants will be explicitly expected to lead teacher development and boost student achievement across the teacher team they supervise.

These shifts can also bolster leadership effectiveness of assistant principals and coaches in particular, who may lack the recent classroom experience to ground them in the specific challenges new standards pose. Our goal is to create multiple pathways toward a set of high leadership standards, so we can attract and support a diverse group of collaborative leaders.

To that end, we are also introducing a new training program to focus exclusively on instructional leadership. That program will launch in 2016 and will prepare teacher leaders and other instructional leaders to support their colleagues as they make the leap to new academic standards. Upon completion, participants may become teacher leaders in their schools or continue their leadership training in ELP the following year.
**S.M.A.R.T. GOALS IN ELP**

**Overview:** Program participants set a rigorous, year-long S.M.A.R.T. goal focused on raising student achievement. This goal defines the impact each Emerging Leader intends to make on their school by the spring semester and shapes the participant’s work for the entire year.

**Process:** Participants finalize their S.M.A.R.T. goal by the first learning meeting, at which point the ELP Directors (and/or other New Leaders staff) review the goal to ensure rigor. Progress to the SMART goal is assessed during learning meeting #2 and final results are assessed during learning meeting #3.

**Sample S.M.A.R.T. Goal:** By April 2013, the Hispanic subgroup in the 4th grade will increase in ELA proficiency from 60% P/A to 80% P/A on the TCAP test. The remaining 20% of students within this sub-group must grow at least one proficiency level on TCAP.

**Use of Benchmarks:** Once S.M.A.R.T. goals are set, aligned benchmarks are defined. ELP requires each participant to specify clear milestones and benchmarks for student outcomes and teacher practice, including specific targets for student sub-groups, grade cohorts and the implementation of effective school practices.

**S.M.A.R.T. Goal Impact on Assessment:** Meeting (or not meeting) the S.M.A.R.T. goal by the end of the year (as supported by evidence) is a key contributing factor in the assessment of the instructional leadership standard, specifically the objective that teacher leaders “utilize multiple forms of student-level data to drive dramatic gains in student achievement.” The Emerging Leader is responsible for presenting evidence to their ELP Directors at the end of the year to demonstrate that his or her teachers made a positive impact on student achievement, with ELP Directors using a rubric to help define “significant progress.”

- **Individual Learning Meetings:** Program participants have three one-on-one meetings with their program Directors to receive feedback, reflect on growth, and discuss goals. Each Emerging Leader develops S.M.A.R.T. goals to drive change and improve student outcomes. Progress to these goals is regularly reflected upon in the learning meetings and is a part of the learning meeting score. See the sidebar on S.M.A.R.T. goals and their important role in program learning and assessment.

Table 1 provides an example of the focus and standards for each assignment administered in 2012-13, as well as the learning cycle in which they were administered.

Participants receive scores measured against the program standards for their performance on each of the four assignments, three learning meetings, and the DDI post-assessment. Those scores are rated using a four-point rubric and indicate whether participants have reached proficiency on the program standards (the New Leaders-determined skills and knowledge areas that a teacher leader should possess).
### TABLE 1: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS OF THE 2012-13 EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

(Note: the assessments below are formal, scored assessments and do not include the practice and reflection assignments referenced above. Also, the term ‘efficacy’ refers to cultivating a school culture that develops persistence and a love of learning in students.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Assignment #1** | Focus: Driving efficacy around improving students’ academic performance as a team leader  
Standards Assessed: Personal leadership, learning and teaching, systems and operations, school culture, human capital management  
Components: Establishing vision reflection; rigor analysis; corrective instruction video clip and reflection; meeting agenda, action minutes, and corrective-instruction plan; strategies supporting students’ persistence and love of learning  
Cycle: Cycle 2 |
| **Assignment #2** | Focus: Driving efficacy around improving students’ academic performance through 1:1 conversations  
Standards Assessed: Personal leadership; learning and teaching; vision, mission, and values; school culture; human capital management  
Components: Difficult conversation role play, coaching session video clip and reflection, lesson plan analysis, team accountability practices  
Cycle: Cycle 4 |
| **Assignment #3** | Focus: Driving efficacy around improving students’ academic performance by leading your team  
Standards Assessed: Personal leadership, learning and teaching, systems and operations, human capital management  
Components: Teacher survey distribution; corrective instruction video clip and reflection; meeting agenda, action minutes, and corrective-instruction plan; analysis and reflection of teacher survey results  
Cycle: Cycle 6 |
| **Assignment #4** | Focus: One-on-one conversations, student outcomes, and ending the year  
Standards Assessed: Personal leadership; learning and teaching; vision, mission, and values; school culture; human capital management  
Components: Difficult conversation role play, coaching session video clip and reflection, lesson plan analysis, team accountability practices, S.M.A.R.T. goals and end-of-year reflections  
Cycle: Cycle 7 |
| **Learning Meeting #1** | Focus: Finalize S.M.A.R.T. goal, feedback on assignment 1, finalize year’s data calendar  
Outcomes:  
• Reflect on S.M.A.R.T. goals and progress on strategic plans  
• Check-in on implementation of the Data Driven Instruction (DDI) cycle  
• Discuss collected strategies for supporting students’ persistence and love of learning  
• Re-visit assignment #1 scores and feedback  
• Discuss action steps to grow  
Cycle: Cycle 1 |
Overview of implementing the learning cycle:

Our programs strive for participants to *master* leadership skills as they develop into skilled educational leaders. The program starts with introducing participants to key theories and concepts via webinars. Participants integrate those new concepts during the guided practice portion of an in-person session in which the ELP community gathers for a trial application of new concepts. Participants might engage in role-play or an analysis of video from a teacher team, all with the purpose of practicing skills and receiving peer and Director feedback (guided practice) in a safe space. The next phase of the learning cycle applies new knowledge and skills with participants’ teacher team at their school site. This application is more high-stakes, but since participants have already practiced the concepts with peers in the guided practice session, they are able to use that experience to inform conversations and strategies with their teams. When practicing at the school site, participants videotape elements of their work, which provides material that participants can use for reflection (alone, with program peers, and/or with New Leaders Directors). Participants will also receive feedback about these videos regarding how to improve in the next iteration—this allows them to see themselves in action while getting very specific guidance about strengths and growth areas. Feedback is also delivered during semi-structured learning meetings where participants and their Directors discuss progress towards proficiency in the standards. Meeting guides, rubrics, and norming processes allow for learning meetings to be tailored to each participant, yet still hold a consistent bar in implementation across all participants and cities. The cyclical nature of learning promotes iterations of practice informed by feedback and real-life application.

Throughout the program, each topic is mastered through this iterative learning cycle. There are numerous opportunities to practice, reflect, and receive feedback: a model of continuous improvement. Table 2 outlines the curriculum topics and delivery formats that are incorporated into the learning cycles.
THE RESEARCH BEHIND UNTAPPED | 19

THE LEARNING CYCLE THROUGH THE EYES OF A PARTICIPANT: AN EXAMPLE

- **Topic to Master:** Coaching (the balance of inquiry and advocacy approaches to coaching)

- **Introduce/Explore Concept:** You will learn some theories during a webinar which will give you baseline knowledge about what inquiry is, what advocacy is, and when to use each strategy.

- **Guided Practice:** In a session with fellow participants, you will practice the inquiry vs. advocacy balance, including when and how to use those approaches. The session may involve role plays or reviews of peers’ videos from their schools. This is a low-stakes opportunity to try your hand at applying this new concept and to get feedback from peers and Directors.

- **Deep Practice & Reflection:** During the course of your regular job as a teacher leader, you will take your new knowledge and your test-driven approaches and use them with your teacher team. When you engage in a session of inquiry or advocacy coaching, you will videotape it.

- **Feedback and Reflection:** You will bring your videotaped coaching to the next ELP in-person session and reflect on it with your peers and your Directors, identifying strengths and looking for places to improve.

- **Repeated Practice and Reflection:** Based on the feedback and reflections you receive during your in-person session, you might go back to your teacher team and try it again, continuing to practice what you are learning in real time.

- **Assessments:** Formal assessments and learning meetings provide additional opportunities for feedback from your Directors. During the three one-on-one learning meetings you have throughout the year, your Directors will provide feedback based on a rubric aligned to the program standards. The formal assessments allow you to demonstrate your learning via your video capture and written responses to prompts.

### Pathway after ELP—Option 1: Classroom-Centered Leadership

ELP prepares participants to succeed in a variety of leadership roles within their school, district, or charter management organization. ELP’s assessment structure provides feedback to all participants on their future development as leaders. Many teachers may prefer to remain closer to the classroom and serve as teacher leaders, sharing their expertise with colleagues and shaping the school for improvement. Possible teacher leadership roles include department chair, grade-level leader, instructional coach, mentor teacher, curriculum specialist, and data coach, among others.

### Pathway after ELP—Option 2: Leadership through the Principalship and Assistant Principalship

Not every ELP participant wants to take steps toward the principalship directly after completing the one-year training program, but many do choose to pursue formal administrative roles as principals or assistant principals following their participation. ELP prepares leaders to move into principal preparation programs, including our New Leaders’ Aspiring Principals Program (APP). ELP’s feedback structure includes giving feedback to participants about whether we think they are ready to move into the next steps for principal preparation, regardless of the specific preparation program they choose. For those interested in pursuing APP specifically, decisions to accept participants are based on participants’ performance and city-specific availability for the next APP cohort.
ELP participants may also choose to be an assistant principal as a way to continue to build leadership skills and progress towards the principalship. In recent years, participants have increasingly come into ELP as assistant principals, and more are serving as assistant principals upon leaving the program. The Emerging Leaders Program’s firm training in instructional and adult leadership can help bring a strong focus to the role of the assistant principal.

The next sections outline existing research supporting the ELP model, the research methods used to examine ELP’s effectiveness, results from a study on ELP’s implementation and effectiveness, and implications for other leadership development programs.

**ORIGINS OF ELP: A HISTORICAL NOTE**

ELP was initially conceptualized as a means to decide who New Leaders should admit into APP, a year-long, residency-based principal preparation program. The ELP design provided an opportunity for New Leaders to assess participants’ readiness for APP, while simultaneously developing participants’ foundational knowledge and skills. In the program’s early cohorts, most participants matriculated into ELP in hopes of earning acceptance into APP. But in more recent years, participants have matriculated with intentions of strengthening their skills as a teacher leader and some district partners have introduced Emerging Leaders as a standalone program, with a specific eye to cultivating instructional leadership among Assistant Principals and building a bench of well-prepared teacher leaders who can elevate instruction in their schools whether or not they ultimately aspire to leading an entire school.

**TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF FY13 EMERGING LEADERS DELIVERY FORMATS & CURRICULUM TOPICS COVERED**

(Note: the assessments below are formal, scored assessments and do not include the practice and reflection assignments referenced above. Also, the term ‘efficacy’ refers to cultivating a school culture that develops persistence and a love of learning in students.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Induction Sessions in Summer:</th>
<th>Nationally-Led Webinar Topics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Program Overview</td>
<td>• Leading Effective Team Meetings and Identifying Strategies to Support Student Efficacy (persistence and love of learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community Building</td>
<td>• Utilizing Strategic Communication to Achieve Your Goals, Including Engaging in Difficult Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building a Culture of Efficacy (cultivating a school culture that develops persistence and a love of learning in students)</td>
<td>• Maintaining the Team’s Vision for College Success and Leading Deep-Dive Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical vs Adaptive Leadership</td>
<td>• Leading Corrective Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Defining, Observing and Coaching Towards Rigor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensive Sessions:</th>
<th>Assessments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Developing a High-Performing Team</td>
<td>• Driving Efficacy as a Team Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing Your Vision</td>
<td>• Coaching Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding and Launching Your Data-Driven Instruction Team (Assessment, Analysis &amp; Action Planning)</td>
<td>• Team Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Person Sessions:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Leading Action Planning to Correct Instruction and Support Student Efficacy (persistence and love of learning)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring Corrective Instruction and Student Efficacy, and Engaging in Difficult Conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintaining the Team’s Vision for College Success and Deep-Dive Conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Defining, Observing and Coaching Towards Rigor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Emerging Leaders Program’s design was based on insights from a decade of developing leadership programs at New Leaders, as well as the best available research studies. ELP was greatly informed by pilots of teacher professional development initiatives that New Leaders conducted as part of its federally-funded5 EPIC program (Effective Practice Incentive Community), in which New Leaders identified, studied, and shared effective practices from some of the highest-gaining urban schools in the country. While learnings from EPIC and New Leaders’ Aspiring Principals Program drove the ELP design, the program design was also shaped in very large part by research. The research findings that drove the ELP design model are discussed below.

**Research on Methods for Developing Teacher Leaders**

ELP was based on the following research about effective development of teacher leaders and school leaders:

**Practice-based learning**

ELP design was informed by socio-cultural learning theory and the 70-20-10 model from business leadership development literature. The 70-20-10 rule for leadership development holds that 70 percent of learning should come from workplace learning, or job-embedded assignments and work (Cross, 2006; Rabin, 2013). The remaining 20 percent should stem from people (coaching, mentoring), with only 10 percent of learning stemming from traditional, structured learning opportunities such as workshops and readings. Socio-cultural learning theory purported that learning was enabled by focusing practice on authentic activities. These activities were coherent, meaningful, and purposeful events (Brown et al., 1989), which motivated learning and provided the ability to achieve full understanding of new ideas (Rogoff, 1990; Salomon & Perkins, 1988).

Research on teacher leader development also emphasized the importance of practice-based, job-embedded assignments. Joyce & Showers (1981) found that teachers integrated new practices into their day-to-day work when the learning structure presented new content with theory, and was accompanied by opportunities for demonstrating new practices and receiving feedback. In other words, teacher learning is most effective when demonstration and practice are central aspects of delivery (Joyce & Showers, 2002). These are two of the main aspects of the ELP’s learning cycle and program design.

**Individualized feedback**

In the literature, deliberate, iterative practice and feedback supported individuals’ learning by giving them the ability to gradually refine practice through repetition after feedback (Ericsson, 2006). The feedback should be targeted and aligned with learning goals (Joyce & Showers, 1981). Coaching, or individualized feedback, was found to substantially improve teachers’ ability to use new practices in school settings when it was combined with the training elements of theory, explanation, demonstrations and practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002). The feedback could be based on videotapes of microteaching episodes (Fernandez, 2010). Studies show that teachers who were coached used new practices as intended more extensively than un-coached teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2002), and demonstrated significant growth in the target practices (Teemant, Wink, & Tyra, 2011). Socio-cultural learning theory also stated that learning was enabled when learners had structured opportunities to practice and receive feedback from an expert (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The Emerging Leaders Program was designed to include feedback at multiple stages of skill development.

**Engagement with peers**

When teachers engaged with their peers in a learning environment, they were more reflective (Camburn, 2010), innovative (Camburn, 2010; Coburn, 2001) and more likely to learn (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010). Similarly research showed that, learning was enhanced when teachers observed their colleagues (Eraut, 2004) and were able to collaboratively discuss approaches and problems (Gersten et al., 2010). These elements were directly aligned to the New Leaders’ learning cycle of repeated practice with program peers and school sites, observations of peers’ practice, and consistent feedback from peers and experts.

**Use of technology, video, and other artifacts**

Collecting artifacts of practice, such as videos or observation data or other materials that illustrate practice in context provided a rich source of learning in collaborative communities (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg, & Pittman, 2008; Sherin & Han, 2004). Video artifacts provided opportunities for teachers to deconstruct and reflect on practice in ways not possible in the midst of teaching (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Fernandez, 2010; Kazemi & Franke, 2004). Video, in particular, provided such opportunities because specific aspects of practice could be selected and replayed to advance learning goals (Sherin & Han, 2004).

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5 New Leaders’ Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) program was funded in part by the U.S. Department of Education’s Teacher Incentive Fund grants from 2007 to 2012.
Video review and reflection were shown to be powerful in the hands of teachers, but were further enhanced under the guide of an expert. Two studies reported that artifacts were best used as resources for learning when facilitators explained why certain artifacts were used and provided specific guidelines about what to look for in artifacts (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Santagata, 2009). Other researchers concluded that effective use of artifacts hinged on practitioners’ ability to reflect on their own practice in collaborative communities (Borko et al., 2008; Sherin & Han, 2003). ELP was designed to leverage video capture to maximize reflection (by oneself, peers, and expert Directors) focused around actual practice.

Research on What Content Should Be Taught to Teacher Leaders
The research studies discussed above explained how teacher leaders learn; other bodies of research explained what content should be taught within ELP. Although leadership development programs drafted model standards specifying what teacher leaders should know and be able to do, there was little research on this topic. Documentation for some programs mentioned the development of skills to facilitate adult learning with no description of what those skills should look like (Hohenbrink et al., 2011; Taylor, Yates, Meyer, & Kinsella, 2011). Current literature mostly describes inquiry/action research and effective teaching (Fogelman, Fishman & Krajcik, 2006; Taylor et al., 2011; Valli, van Zee, Rennert-Ariev, Mikeska, Catlett- Muhammed & Roy, 2006).

Teacher leadership standards
In response to the need for teacher leaders, a cross section of experts (the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium) developed teacher leader model standards to delineate the critical dimensions of teacher leaders. These standards articulated what knowledge, skills, and competencies teacher leaders should have. The standards (see sidebar) emphasized that teacher leaders should be able to build culture (I), use research to drive teacher practice and student learning (II), promote job-embedded learning opportunities (III), drive continuous improvement in instructional strategies (IV), use data to drive goals and learning (V), stimulate partnerships with families and communities (VI), and advocate for supportive policies that strengthen education endeavors (Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The Emerging Leaders Program standards were aligned very closely to the Teacher Leader Model Standards, with emphasis on standards I – V, particularly standards I, IV, and V.

TEACHER LEADER MODEL STANDARDS

I. Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning
II. Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning
III. Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement
IV. Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning
V. Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement
VI. Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community
VII. Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium, 2011
The limited research on teacher leaders suggested that teacher leadership development programs should focus on the following skills:

**Adult leadership**
Teacher leaders needed knowledge about how to work with adult learners (Harris, 2005; Jackson et al., 2010; Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium, 2011). As noted earlier, one study indicated that a reading coach’s ability to work with adult learners was just as or more important than possessing content-area or pedagogical expertise (Marsh et al., 2012). Another study with literacy coaches reported the importance of knowing how to shift adult practice (Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2008), and an additional study emphasized that working with adults required different teaching skills than working with students (Hohenbrink et al., 2011). Teacher leaders must be explicitly taught adult leadership skills, especially given the documented levels of change resistance they faced (Donaldson, Johnson, Kirkpatrick, Marinell, Steele, & Szczesiul, 2008) and how that resistance limited their effectiveness (Marsh, McCombs & Martorell, 2010). ELP addressed this need by emphasizing training on adult learning, personal leadership skills, and change management for teacher leaders.

**Facilitative leadership skills**
Just as they had to learn how to work with individual adults, teacher leaders needed to purposefully learn how to facilitate or work with groups. Teacher leaders needed skills to facilitate meetings, work constructively with teachers, foster decision making, and support development towards meeting improvement goals (Harris, 2004). Training programs were found to be more valuable when participants learned how to lead groups, work in teams, and share leadership (Hohenbrink et al., 2011), and difficulties in shifting practice occurred in the absence of such facilitative skills (Levine & Marcus, 2010). As part of Emerging Leaders’ approach to building a distributive model of leadership for the school, participants learned and practiced facilitative leadership skills while they worked with their school-based teacher team.

**Data driven instruction**
Three of the seven domains of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Domains II, IV and V) emphasized that teacher leaders should understand and support other teachers with data analysis to improve teaching. Teachers who received ongoing coaching and support from data coaches to analyze data and make instructional changes reported shifts in their own practice (Marsh et al., 2010). Furthermore, ongoing data coaching was also related to small increases in student achievement (Marsh et al., 2010). When teacher leaders served as data coaches, they shaped other teachers’ understanding and use of data to improve instruction, particularly in low-performing schools (Lachat & Smith, 2005). The influence of a well-trained teacher leader in data driven instruction (DDI) reached students and other teachers alike. Mastery in developing structures and practices steeped in DDI has been a critical component of New Leaders’ organizational work and the Emerging Leaders Program.

**School culture**
Shaping the culture of a school to focus on student learning was critical for school leaders, since leadership can build a culture of instructional excellence, norms and values, and trust (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Teacher leaders served as influential drivers of that culture, creating urgency among faculty to address student engagement and building efficacy among faculty to use data to improve instructional practices (Portin, Russell, Samuelson, & Knapp, 2013). While teacher leaders helped shape culture, they also needed a supportive climate to be able to serve as leaders among their peers, regardless of formal authority. Therefore, teacher leadership required attention to purposefully building a collaborative, trusting culture which emphasized norms of excellence among teachers (Harris, 2005). Teacher leaders needed to learn how to shape culture and what elements of culture needed prioritizing.
Empirically Examining ELP for Evidence of Effectiveness: The Research Study Methodology

To determine whether the Emerging Leaders Program meets its objectives of increasing the knowledge and skills of educators to serve as teacher leaders, New Leaders regularly conducts program evaluation studies. These studies provide insight into program effectiveness as well as insight into areas for improvement. This report presents findings from an evaluation study of the second cohort of ELP, which was funded by a federal i3 grant. This section describes the methods used for the study.

ELP Theory of Action
This study focuses on the implementation of ELP (the program activities), as well as participants’ skill development (immediate impacts), their effective leadership practices (intermediate outcomes), and their success in reaching full proficiency on ELP standards (final outcomes, facilitating career pathways as a skilled teacher leader or as an aspiring principal). The conceptual framework for this theory of action is illustrated in Figure 5. (Please note: this study does not cover all intermediate and final outcomes. For example, teacher leadership positions held immediately after the program were not captured and could not be used as a data source for this particular cohort of ELP.)

Research Questions
This report provides research and evaluation that examines the merits of the program’s theory of action. The study was designed to answer the research questions in Figure 6.

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6 New Leaders, with support of the George W. Bush Institute Alliance to Reform Educational Leadership (AREL), has created a series of white papers documenting our program evaluation methods. The papers offer details about our program evaluation efforts and share lessons learned and recommendations for programs seeking to conduct their own evaluations. The paper series is available on New Leaders’ website: http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/publications/principal-preparation-program-self-evaluation/
### TABLE 3: BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHICS OF ELP COHORT 2 (PROGRAM STARTERS)

#### GENDER BY ETHNICITY

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<thead>
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<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>(Missing)</th>
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<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<td>16</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
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<td>Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>1.3%</td>
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<td>Black or African-American</td>
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<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
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</table>

#### PREVIOUS ROLE (PRIOR TO ELP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising/Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Developer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Support Staff/Facilitator/Specialist</td>
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<td>Lead Teacher</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy Coach/Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math Coach/Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other School Administrator</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Dev. Staff</td>
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<td>Program Director/Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
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#### DEGREE

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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>106</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
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#### MOST RECENT SCHOOL TYPE (PRIOR TO ELP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent/Alternative</td>
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<tr>
<td>New District Start-Up</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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#### MOST RECENT SCHOOL LEVEL (PRIOR TO ELP)

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<td>K-12</td>
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<td>6-12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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Data Sample
This evaluation sample included all 582 applicants and 315 participants in the second cohort of the program (2012-13) across all 10 participating cities (Baltimore, MD; Bay Area, CA; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Memphis, TN; New Orleans, LA; New York City, NY; Newark, NJ; Prince George’s County, MD; Washington, DC). The table below details the demographic background and experience of the 315 program starters.

Data Sources
New Leaders used several sources of data to measure program quality:

Program data:
- Admissions data
- Enrollment data
- Attendance data

Surveys:
- Participants’ global perceptions of program quality (2x/year)
- Participants’ feedback on sessions (in-person sessions and webinars)
- Teacher feedback on Emerging Leaders’ practice & impact
- Host principal feedback on program and Emerging Leaders’ performance and growth

Scored Assessments:
- Assignment scores against a 4-point rubric by normed staff (see tables and descriptions of the format, focus, and timing of assignments in the program design section above)
- Learning meeting scores and progress against S.M.A.R.T goals
- Pre- and post-assessments of (1) belief and knowledge of the data-driven instruction cycle and (2) ability to lead a team meeting

Internal New Leaders Information:
- Staff focus groups & workgroups: cross-functional examinations of data to inform future implementation
- Program documents, artifacts and meeting notes

Analyses
The program implementation questions were answered with descriptive analyses of teacher and supervisor survey results, assignment scores, pre- and post-assessments and staff focus group themes. When available, data were compared across points in time (e.g., survey responses at the mid-year point and end-of-year point). Additionally, each component was examined for patterns across cities, with noteworthy patterns reported. Some hypotheses were included in the discussion of results, offering possible explanations for data patterns; however, the interpretations may not be exhaustive.

Furthermore, internal analysis specifically examined whether ELP participants drove instructional development among the teachers they supervised, as evidenced by student growth. In 2012-13, participants’ in-school placements were not tracked in a way that allowed New Leaders to systematically determine their impact on student outcomes. Data collection improved by the 2013-14 school year, the third ELP cohort, allowing us to tie student achievement data to individual ELP participants.

To do so, we reviewed performance on annual state assessments in the grades and subjects affected by 60 ELP participants in four cities where data was complete: Memphis, New Orleans, New York and Washington, D.C. In order to capture grade-level proficiency growth accurately, New Leaders used the previous grade for the 2013 baseline where possible, to most accurately represent change in the same cohort of students. For example, if an ELP participant worked with a group of fourth-grade math teachers in 2013-14, we used 2012-13 third grade math scores as a baseline. The aim in applying this baseline was to isolate the impact of the ELP participant in the grade and subject area, to find the extent to which participants drove improvements in the percentages of students scoring proficient on the state required assessment.

In addition, we also analyzed the S.M.A.R.T. goals that ELP participants established for each member of their teacher teams. This analysis looked at the extent to which participants met their own individual goals to improve student achievement. The targets, measurement strategy, and assessment were specific to each participant.
ELP carefully selected candidates and had a high participant completion rate
A large pool (N = 572) of applicants were identified and completed three admissions activities that gauged candidates’ beliefs, instructional practice, and goal-setting approaches. The activities were created and scored internally after a thorough norming process. Of the 572 applicants, 360 (63 percent) candidates were extended offers to join Cohort 2 of ELP. Of 360 offers extended, 319 candidates accepted and 315 started the program in 2012. The selection process was implemented with consistency across all candidates (all candidates completed the admissions activities and were assessed against an internally-established bar) and with consistency across location sites (all sites followed standardized processes and key decisions were centralized).

Of the 315 participants who started the second cohort of ELP, 231 (74 percent) completed the program. Participants were considered to have completed the program if they had their third and final learning meeting with their ELP Directors. Participants who left the program before that learning meeting either withdrew (voluntarily, n = 77) or were dismissed (non-voluntarily, n = 7). These data reflect a point in the program’s history when the primary purpose of ELP was to screen candidates for the Aspiring Principals Program (APP). Cohort 2 participants tended to withdraw from ELP after they determined APP was not the right path for them. In response to this trend, New Leaders increased communication to later candidates before they committed to be ELP participants, indicating the time commitment involved and more accurately depicting the variety of career options following participation in ELP. As a result, more recent cohorts have had higher completion rates.

Participants found sessions to be of high-quality
The formal training structure consisted of an induction meeting (introduction to the program, cohort, and staff), intensive session (introduction to program’s core content areas), webinars (nationally-delivered, live virtual learning modules), and in-person sessions (locally-delivered sessions with guided practice and feedback). Average attendance across cities for each of these formal training structures was as follows: induction: 97 percent; intensive: 97 percent, webinars: 73 to 85 percent for all five webinars, in-person sessions: 88 to 97 percent for the six cycles of required sessions. While there were slight variations in participation across cities and training structures, there were no patterns of consistently lower participation in any city, nor were there any cities that had considerably low participation for any given session. All sessions were carried out by New Leaders staff as planned and all sessions were attended by the majority of participants.

To understand perceptions of quality, feedback was solicited from Emerging Leaders via confidential surveys administered electronically after each session. Overall, 90 percent or more of participants found the sessions to be of high quality. Specifically:

1. Nearly all participants (97 percent) agreed the induction sessions were facilitated well, met goals and objectives successfully, and resulted in clear understanding of and expectations for the yearlong program.
2. Nearly all respondents (98 percent or more) agreed that the intensive sessions were facilitated in a way that matched participants’ learning needs, and led to opportunities to practice key skills for leading a team and focusing on data-driven instruction.
3. Consistently across the numerous in-person sessions, 90 percent or more participants reported the sessions were high quality, produced helpful peer feedback, provided opportunities to practice leading adults to drive student achievement gains, and provided materials that could be applied to participants’ work in their school sites.
ELP provided opportunities for participants to regularly apply and practice learning in school settings

Enrollment in the program required prior agreement from the host principal that the participant would be able to work with a team of teachers and be able to carry out the ELP assignments. By the host principals’ agreeing that participants could have the opportunity to apply their learning, the host principals played an important role in setting participants up for success. The opportunities made it possible for Emerging Leaders to apply program-introduced strategies in a range of placement contexts. Participants’ placements included school contexts ranging from charter to district schools, a variety of roles, and teaching an array of subjects (see Table 3 above for demographic background information).

Participants perceived the Emerging Leaders Program to be applicable to this wide variety of contexts. Nearly all participants (99 percent) agreed with the statement, “I am able to apply tools and strategies learned in ELP to my school.” Regarding opportunities related to the four job-embedded, multi-pronged assignments, 91 percent of participants reported the assignments were a strong measure of their skills and 87 percent reported they had sufficient opportunities to carry out the assignments in their schools.

Emerging Leaders participants continuously received and implemented feedback to improve practice

The programmatic process of receiving and providing feedback was consistently implemented and perceived to be instrumental in improving practice. Across all cities, 99 percent of participants reported the year’s feedback informed them of their strengths and growth areas. Furthermore, 95 percent of participants indicated that their leadership development was positively influenced by Directors’ feedback, peer feedback, and job-embedded assignments. Directors were accessible throughout the program for support (98 percent national agreement). Nearly all participants (99.5 percent) reported that learning meetings provided the opportunity to reflect on their progress. With regard to peer feedback, 94 percent agreed that feedback received from peers helped build their personal leadership capacity.

Emerging Leaders perceived growth in their leadership skills and practice

Throughout ELP, participants sought to develop their leadership skills. Whether participants were pursuing a teacher leadership role or aspired to be a principal, participants engaged in the program to develop their leadership skills. The specific focal areas of skills development were articulated in the program standards (see program overview section). The standards serve multiple purposes: they are a guide of what Emerging Leaders participants should know and be able to do upon completion of the program if they are to be considered for APP; they drive all webinars, sessions, and assignments; they are a framework to which all feedback should be aligned; and they provide the structure and basis for rubrics against which participants’ growth can be measured.

As intended, participants perceived growth in their skills and practice through their engagement with ELP. At both the mid-year point and the end of the program year, 96 percent or more Emerging Leaders perceived growth in leading dramatic gains in student learning, building a culture of student achievement, providing feedback, using data to advance achievement, and having difficult conversations. Modestly less progress was achieved at mid-year in participants’ perceived ability to provide helpful instructional strategies to their teacher teams, as only 89 percent of respondents reported believing ELP had helped them acquire skills in this area. By year-end, the number of respondents who reported that ELP had improved their skill in that same domain increased from 89 to 95 percent, indicating that the weakest spot of ELP influence had improved over the course of the year. There was some variation among participants with regard to the accuracy of program assessments as measures of leadership skills. The large majority of participants found the assignments to be strong measures (88 percent at the lowest point). By the end of the program, 99 percent of participants agreed that ELP focused on content that was important for developing leadership skills.

REMINDER OF ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

Participants received scores against the program standards based on their performance on each of four assignments, three learning meetings, and a DDI post-assessment. Those scores were rated against a 4-point rubric and indicated whether participants had reached proficiency on the program standards (the New Leaders-determined skills and knowledge areas that a leader of teachers should possess.) When viewing ELP as selection tool for APP (as ELP was intended in the early years), the rates of proficiency were also the primary sources of data informing the final decision of whether to offer participants acceptance into APP.
Teachers and supervisors observed that ELP bolstered participants’ leadership skills and practice. While it was important for participants to perceive their own growth, it was also important for members of their school community to observe growth in participants’ leadership performance. By program design, each participant worked with a supervisor within a school (most typically the host principal). The supervisors and the teachers were surveyed once during the year to reflect on participants’ growth, leadership skills, use of data-driven instruction, feedback practices, and creation of systems. They used a modified 360° survey with questions that were aligned to the program standards and paralleled questions asked of Emerging Leaders.

Evaluations of the Emerging Leaders’ skills and teaching practice were positive, with over 85 percent of responding supervisors agreeing that their Emerging Leaders demonstrated growth in leadership capacity, drove student gains, built an achievement culture, and used data-driven instruction. Over 96 percent of teachers agreed Emerging Leaders were hard working, expressed high student expectations, and maintained belief in the ability of students to achieve academic success. Among both supervisors and teachers, slightly weaker support (86 percent) was voiced for skills in feedback practices and instructional strategies. Given that instructional strategy was also one of the weaker areas in the participants’ self-reports, this emerged as an area to bolster in future implementation. As a result of this data, more content and support for instructional strategies was added to future iterations of the program.

Emerging Leaders participants demonstrated proficiency on assignments measuring critical leadership skills. Participants’ skill growth was officially measured on assignments and assessments that were aligned to the program standards. Formal assessments were implemented with fidelity throughout the program year and provided the intended opportunity for determining participants’ proficiency against the program standards. In general, over half the participants were proficient on eight or more of the eleven concepts by the end of the program. Participants achieved the highest rates of proficiency in:

1. Reflective practice and continuous improvement (personal leadership standard);
2. Professional development (human capital management standard);
3. Communication, cultural competence, & interpersonal relationships (personal leadership standard).

New Leaders intentionally set the proficiency bar very high on the assessments. In order to meet expectations for proficiency, participants needed to demonstrate that they were highly accomplished teacher leaders in terms of adult leadership practice, instructional knowledge, and impact on teacher practice and student outcomes. While not all participants reached proficiency at the end of the program year, almost all candidates evidenced growth in key skill areas over the program year. Specifically, participants on average gained 0.68 points on a 4 point scale from the DDI entry-assessment.
to the post-assessment, indicating substantial growth in skills related to the critical skill of leading a team to understand student data, set goals, and use this information to bolster student achievement. This assessment was externally validated by a study funded by the Gates Foundation. Across the other standards, participants gained on average 0.30 to 0.35 points (on a 4 point scale) on learning and teaching, diagnostic and strategic planning, school culture’s urgency and efficacy, and leadership and professional development. On average, all participants demonstrated growth in measured skills and knowledge across the span of the program.

When specifically assessing ELP participants seeking entry into our Aspiring Principals Program (APP), 80 percent of participants demonstrated proficiency on 10 or 11 of the 11 concepts. The remaining 20 percent who were accepted into APP with lower rates of proficiency were offered acceptance through an appeals process. In general, the rates of proficiency indicated that Emerging Leaders participants acquired considerable skills and knowledge to strengthen their leadership, regardless of their continued path to APP or into other positions within their schools. This program evaluation study demonstrated that ELP is effective at building leadership skills. At the same time, as we evaluated our program, New Leaders determined that a program design assumption about the necessary level of instructional expertise among participants needed to be revisited to ensure that we were identifying and developing candidates with the requisite level of instructional expertise to lead colleagues toward instructional excellence. As a result, in more recent cohorts New Leaders has reweighted selection to place even greater emphasis on instructional skills and we are also enhancing curriculum and content to focus more intensively on instruction, resulting in instructionally stronger teacher leaders. We are also creating a new instruction-focused ELP pathway for candidates who need focused development in this area.

7 The ELP data driven assessments was externally validated (Goff, P. & Hyun, S.H. (2014). Data-driven instruction: An analysis of instrument validity. University of Wisconsin – Madison.)
Emerging Leaders participants positively influenced student outcomes and supported school improvement

Emerging Leaders made an immediate impact on student achievement during their program year, with many leading student learning gains across the classrooms they supervised. New Leaders is taking a two-pronged approach to measuring ELP impact on student outcomes. First, ELP is part of a rigorous longitudinal evaluation being conducted by the RAND Corporation as part of the New Leaders’ federal i3 grant. That evaluation is focused on participants’ impact on student achievement after completing the Emerging Leaders Program and the Aspiring Principals Program; results from the RAND evaluation will not be available until 2017. The RAND study will examine only the portion of Emerging Leaders participants who continue into our principal preparation pathway and then become principals. Given that RAND’s analyses of student-level data take time and only focus on a portion of ELP participants, New Leaders also has a robust internal program evaluation strategy to provide quick-turnaround results that can inform program improvements and demonstrate impact.

This internal analysis tracked student achievement outcomes using publicly-available, school-level student achievement data. New Leaders examined changes in the percentage of students scoring proficient or greater on state assessments associated with the grades and subjects impacted by Emerging Leaders participants in 2013-14. In order to capture grade-level proficiency growth accurately, New Leaders used the previous grade for the 2013 baseline where possible to most accurately represent change in the same cohort of students. For example, if an ELP participant worked with fourth grade math teachers in 2013-14, then 2012-13 third grade math scores were used as a baseline, since the scores theoretically came from the same cohort of students. The aim in applying this baseline was to isolate the impact of the Emerging Leader in their grade and subject area.

Note: During the year of this program evaluation study (2012-13), collected placement data did not allow New Leaders to systematically determine impact on student outcomes. However, the data collection process has improved over time and we are now able to report data (below) from the following year (2013-14), which shows New Leaders’ strong impact on student outcomes.
Emerging Leaders are moving student achievement on state assessments. More than 70 percent of Emerging Leaders in 2013-14 (for whom we have reliable state assessment data) saw increases in the percentages of students scoring proficient in at least one of the grades/subjects they impacted. Specifically:

- 82 percent (14 of 17) New York City Emerging Leaders participants led increases in the percentage of students scoring proficient in at least one of the grades/subjects they influenced.

- 73 percent (11 of 15) Washington DC Emerging Leaders participants (for whom we have student achievement data available) led increases in the percentage of students scoring proficient in at least one of the grades/subjects they influenced.

- 63 percent (15 of 24) of Shelby County, TN Emerging Leaders participants posted 2014 TVAAS school growth scores in their subject area that met the Standard for Academic Growth.8

In addition to the analyses with state assessment data, impact on student achievement was also measured through participants’ personalized SMART goals that they established for their specific teacher teams’ classrooms. Unlike the state assessment analyses, which look at the extent to which Emerging Leaders drove improvements in the percentages of students meeting proficiency standards on state required assessments, the SMART goal analyses look at the extent to which Emerging leaders met their own individual goal focused on increasing student achievement. The targets, measurement strategy and assessment are specific to each Emerging Leader. Specifically, nearly 100 percent (33 of 34) of the ELPs for whom we were able to analyze SMART goal data improved student performance on interim assessment data in 2013-14:

- 100 percent of Emerging Leaders in Shelby County, TN (Memphis) led gains through their teacher teams (24 of 24 participants), with 55 percent leading double-digit gains.

- 100 percent of New Orleans Emerging Leaders achieved gains in student achievement (5 of 5 participants), and 80 percent saw double digit gains in student achievement (4 of 5 participants).

- We estimate9 that 76 percent of New York City Emerging Leaders achieved gains in student achievement (16 of 21 participants).

As these data suggest, participants are able to support student success even during their training year. The gains reflected above are no small feat given that most Emerging Leaders were working in chronically poor performing schools, in many cases the bottom 5 percent of schools in their districts in terms of academic performance. Furthermore, New Leaders partners with districts that serve large numbers of low-income students (average of 74 percent are FARM-eligible10), and our Emerging Leaders, on average, serve in schools with over 10 percent more FARM-eligible students (83 percent) than their high-need districts.

These are promising results based on publicly available data; we continue to look for opportunities to conduct more rigorous studies of ELP’s impact on student outcomes.

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8 The Standard for Academic Growth represents one year’s worth of growth relative to the Tennessee statewide distribution. According to the official TVAAS site, “The Standard for Academic Growth is met when the student group makes one year’s growth and maintains their relative achievement level from one year to the next in relation to the statewide distribution.”

9 This specific statistic was calculated based on detailed reports from the participants’ ELP Directors; the Directors had first-hand knowledge of shifts in student achievement as part of tracking participants’ progress towards meeting their S.M.A.R.T. goals.

10 Free and Reduced Meal
As part of our effort to continually improve our programs, New Leaders assessed the factors reported by Emerging Leaders staff and participants to enable or hinder the program’s implementation and effectiveness. To identify these factors, New Leaders analyzed multiple sources of information, including: participant surveys (i.e., closed- and open-ended questions); program data (e.g., exit data, software support requests); structured interviews with staff; and outcomes from internal, and cross-functional data review discussions.

Factors that enabled program implementation

In general, participants were satisfied with the program at the end of year, as evidenced by many data points, including 96 percent being willing to recommend the program to a friend or colleague, 98 percent finding their new ELP skills helpful for building leadership capacity, and 99 percent being able to apply their ELP tools and strategies to their schools.

Program delivery methods supported program implementation and participant learning

Surveys (including open ended comments) consistently found support for the program, as participants expressed satisfaction with the emphasis on data-driven instruction processes, difficult conversations, and general development of leadership skills. Most participants (89 percent) reported a match between the expectations they developed during the admissions process and their experience throughout the year in ELP. The program elements that had the greatest impact on development, according to 95 percent of participants, were:

- Local in-person sessions
- Formal Director feedback
- Job-embedded assignments
- ELP peer feedback
- Informal Director feedback

Engaged, knowledgeable Directors drove participant learning

One key component that supported successful implementation was Director engagement, support, and knowledge. Participants agreed that their Directors: provided feedback that was helpful (99 percent), were knowledgeable about the content discussed in sessions (99.5 percent), were accessible for support (98 percent), and kept content engaging and interesting (99.5 percent). The Directors came to New Leaders with years of experience leading schools, managing people, and delivering significant gains in students’ achievement. The majority of Directors built their careers in the same city in which they supported Emerging Leaders. So in addition to having education knowledge and school management experience, they also had invaluable contextual knowledge about the cities, districts, and CMOs in which participants worked. With the support of the national curriculum, Directors were able to use their robust experience to facilitate and implement a program that built skills in the Emerging Leaders over the year.
Structured, high-quality feedback strengthened the program

Participants reported that feedback given by ELP Directors was high quality and valuable. Directors had been trained in giving feedback through weekly community of practice calls, norming for learning meetings, and general alignment with the Standards of Quality and Effective Facilitation (SQEF; see sidebar). The SQEF is an internally-developed set of standards used by all program Directors to deliver content in an engaging manner, with high rigor, and with attention to flow and learning environment. The feedback was consistently very positive across all program cities, with 99 percent or more of participants agreeing that feedback was high-quality, focused on areas that needed improvement, facilitated growth, and identified next steps for growth.

Previously-established MOUs with districts

When ELP was initially launched in 2011, New Leaders encountered some obstacles in getting permission for participants to observe teachers and video-record meetings. Various district and union regulations needed to be considered and addressed within memorandums for understanding (MOUs) or memorandums of agreement (MOAs) before the program could be implemented as intended. The program was able to launch more efficiently in 2012-13 than in previous years because a strategy was in place to preemptively address these concerns and work within union and district regulations. This possible hindrance should be anticipated for similar programs as they launch; extra time should be built in for establishing permissions.

Factors that hindered program implementation

Assignments not consistently supported in host schools

Assignments were another area of the program with which participants reported some difficulty. At the end of the year, 13 percent ($n = 26$) of survey respondents indicated they did not have sufficient opportunity in their schools to carry out assignments as required. When those 26 participants were prompted to specify barriers to completing assignments, the most common answer selected was “challenges with scheduling” (16 of the 26). Other reported barriers included administrative support (7 of 26) and lack of opportunity to lead a team (7 of 26).

Given the challenges cited by the 26 participants who thought they had insufficient opportunity to complete the assignments in their schools, New Leaders now emphasizes with host principals the importance or scope of assignments and ensures that they are committed to providing the requisite opportunities to complete those assignments before participants enroll in ELP. Also, the assignments required a considerable amount of time for Emerging Leaders to complete and for Directors to score, according to anecdotal information from Directors and internal program staff. In internal meetings, staff members recognized the assignments’ critical, high-stakes role and the need to design assignments in a way that facilitated participants’ capability to complete the work and demonstrate their skill and growth. New Leaders staff members continuously refine assignments and assessments to ensure that we have the best information to assess participants’ proficiency while still minimizing burdens for participants and scorers.
Specific technology platform hindered efficient submission of assignments

In the initial years of ELP, participants uploaded assignments and videos to Avatar, a learning management system, but this platform proved frustrating across all sites. Only 54 percent of participants found Avatar to be user-friendly. Accessing program materials on Avatar was difficult for 16 percent of participants and 32 percent of participants were not comfortable submitting assignments and videos online. The struggles to navigate the Avatar platform dampened participants’ and Directors’ experiences with program materials and assignments by creating frustration and wasting time, thereby weakening program implementation.

Internal support was provided for program-related technology; the New Leaders’ program support team offered a two-day response guarantee for issues submitted to them. Of 106 participants who reached out to New Leaders’ program support for help, 85 percent agreed that they received a timely response (within 2 days), and 77 percent found that program support was effective in resolving issues. While the responsiveness of the Program Support team and the trainings helped to mitigate some concerns with Avatar, the software persisted as the biggest source of discontentment with ELP.

Based on this experience, New Leaders adopted a different learning management system for the current cohort and we have already received reports of significantly smoother implementation.

Specific timing and technology of webinars needed improvement

As discussed above in the section on formal learning structures—and consistent with our learning theory—we anticipated and saw evidence that the highest-impact program elements were those in which participants interacted with others or applied concepts to their current schools. By design, the formal learning structures (webinars) were meant to be minimized and function primarily to introduce content that would be built upon in practice. While 77 percent of participants thought the webinars influenced their development, most agreed that other learning structures advanced their learning to a greater degree. For example, one participant wrote, “I gained the most from local sessions and performance conversations because I am interacting with a live person.” Participants from the second ELP cohort shed additional light on opportunities to improve the usefulness of the webinars, citing technology issues and the webinars’ scheduling and length.

As a result, New Leaders has made two significant changes to webinars for future cohorts. First, as noted above, New Leaders changed the technology platform for webinars, resulting in far fewer technological difficulties. Second, New Leaders converted all webinars to be asynchronous (recorded) to mitigate scheduling conflicts. Participants are now able to view the webinar at a time that is convenient to them (within a flexible window), thereby alleviating conflicts participants may have had with school or family commitments.
Conclusions and Recommendations for Teacher Leadership Development

**ELP is an innovative program getting promising results.**

- **Evidence of improved student achievement.** Emerging Leaders are getting results for students even within their training year. Nearly 100 percent (33 of 34) of ELP participants for whom we were able to analyze S.M.A.R.T. goal data improved student performance. Moreover, Emerging Leaders delivered a positive impact on state assessment tests within their training year. Across the three districts where such data were available, more than 70 percent of Emerging Leaders improved the proficiency rates of their students for at least one grade/subject.

- **A large percentage of participants, host principals, and teacher team members agree with statements affirming the program’s quality, relevance, and usefulness.** Over 90 percent of participants find the program to be high quality, with more than 96 percent of participants confident that they developed skills in key leadership areas (including using data to drive student achievement, building school culture, providing feedback to teachers, etc.). Host principals and teachers supervised by ELP participants agree. Over 96 percent of teachers agree that ELP participants are hardworking, express high student expectations, and maintain beliefs. Over 85 percent of host principals agree that participants develop leadership capacity, drive student gains, build an achievement culture, and skillfully use data-driven instruction processes.

**ELP’s positive results are likely due to successful implementation of research-based leadership development practices.** Participant respondents (over 90 percent) agree overwhelmingly that development practices are well-implemented. These practices include:

- **Maximizing opportunities for participants to practice leadership skills in authentic settings.** Emerging Leaders participants practice their new skills at their school as they lead a team of teachers. The majority of the program’s work is done in the school setting, with video from that authentic work serving as evidence of skill development.

- **Focusing resources on providing individualized feedback.** The learning cycle facilitates constant feedback based on evidence of real-world practice. Fellow cohort members and expert Directors/mentors are able maximize efficiency in the provision of feedback by viewing video of actual practice, as opposed to expending time and money on in-person observations of participants’ work.

- **Providing rich, high-quality content in cost-efficient ways that enables resources to be dedicated to individualized feedback.** The formal introduction of new content is delivered primarily through asynchronous (recorded) webinars. This allows high-quality content to be delivered consistently across sites, and allows participants the flexibility of attending to the content in accordance with their school and personal schedules. Having content delivered via webinar frees faculty to spend their time observing video of authentic practice, giving feedback to participants, and shaping participants’ feedback to each other.

- **Connecting content/assignments to schools’ needs.** Assessments are job-embedded to keep participants’ work focused on improving their schools, and to maximize the relevance of concepts to daily instructional responsibilities. The assessments ask for evidence of content-related work done with the teacher teams. For example, one assignment asks Emerging Leaders participants to submit video of a data team meeting in which the participant guided a team of teachers through an analysis of student data to assess progress toward instructional goals.

11 Reflects data for Emerging Leaders in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shelby County (Memphis), TN.
ELP’s positive results are also likely due to its content focus. By the end of the program, 99 percent of participants agree that ELP focuses on content that is important for developing leadership skills. In particular, participants value the program’s focus on:

- **High-leverage leadership skills.** The Emerging Leaders Program focuses on content areas that translate to school improvement: adult leadership, data-driven instruction, observation and supervision, and cultivating a school culture that develops persistence and a love of learning in students (Desravines & Fenton, 2015). Over 99 percent of participants agree that ELP focuses on content that is important for developing leadership skills.

- **Building skills necessary for leading adults and shaping culture.** The program emphasizes content specific to the needs of new teacher leaders. Specifically, participants focus on developing a team, building support for data-driven instruction, and bolstering team members’ instructional practice. It is important for learning opportunities to build skills relevant specifically to teacher leaders’ scope of work. Nearly all (99 percent) of participants report that the Emerging Leaders Program provides strategies and tools that can be applied to their current schools in their daily work as teacher leaders.

This type of program model requires the following design conditions/enablers:

- **Partnerships that can be leveraged to identify high-quality recruits and ensure participants have opportunities to practice.** With the program’s emphasis on in-school work and video capture, permissions and buy-in are critical. When establishing program agreements with districts and CMOs, district and union regulations need to be considered. It is also essential that host principals guarantee that participants will be able to lead a team of teachers, a precondition for full engagement in the program’s job-embedded work and assignments. Prior to the program’s start, 100 percent of host principals committed to supporting and providing opportunities that enable full participation in the program.

- **Capitalize on technology.** Many of the innovative aspects of ELP are made possible with technology—from the easy video capture of authentic practice to the delivery of content via national webinars. By taking advantage of technology, Directors and participants provided feedback on actual practice without having to travel to school sites. With content delivered via webinars, Directors had more time to provide individualized feedback. The program admittedly had a rocky start with a specific technology platform, but after a change to a more user-friendly learning management system, the benefits of technology have prevailed and have enabled a strong program. Overall, more than 90 percent of participants find the webinars and the feedback (after the video capture of practice) to be high-quality and to advance their learning.

- **Faculty’s knowledge.** On the ground, New Leaders staff members are well-trained experts. They have first-hand knowledge of school leadership from their own experience as successful school leaders; have invaluable contextual knowledge about the city, district, and CMOs; and have been thoroughly trained in New Leaders’ feedback structures and assessment scoring. Over 98 percent of participants agree that their Directors are knowledgeable, helpful, accessible, and engaging.

**PROGRAM DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**

For more information and detail please visit newleaders.org/untapped
Recommendations for initiatives to cultivate teacher leaders:

- **Initiatives focused on the principal pipeline should start with developing teacher leaders; our profession needs to provide more stepping stones to school leadership.** The predominant model for leadership development cultivates school-wide leaders from strong classroom teachers. For many, their first time leading adults comes when they are leading a whole faculty of 30+ teachers. By providing stepping stones from the classroom to the principalship, programs can support teachers’ gradual development of skills. Teachers can develop their approaches to instituting new data-driven instruction practices, shifting mindsets, and conducting helpful observation and supervision with a small team before implementing those approaches with an entire faculty. A focus on developing high-potential educational leaders early in their careers also enables districts/CMOs to cultivate strong candidates whose backgrounds align with district priorities. During the 2012-13 school year, 66 percent of Emerging Leaders participants were people of color and 64 percent had a STEM background, enabling district partners to diversify and strengthen their leadership pipeline.

- **Provide multiple points of entry into leadership development trajectories.** Leadership programs should provide targeted development opportunities that allow the program to meet teachers where they are. The training should be differentiated to teachers’ individual growth areas as well as their career ambitions, whether they aspire to remain in the classroom or pursue the principalship.

- **Teacher leader programs should focus on high-leverage leadership practices relevant to teacher leaders’ scope of influence and career stage.** By keeping the focus appropriate to the stage and scope of teacher leaders, program participants can develop their skills within their realm of influence and within their current position. Once they develop their skills within the teacher leader focus, they can move in increments to broader leadership if they wish, or they can drive school improvement from myriad teacher leadership roles.

- **Maintain a strong focus on instructional leadership.** A focus on a variety of skills, such as adult and team leadership, is critical for developing teacher leaders, but programs also need to maintain a strong focus on developing excellence in instructional leadership, particularly in a climate of rising academic expectations such as Common Core and similarly rigorous college and career readiness standards. By ensuring that teacher leaders are instructionally sound in their own practice and know how to cultivate strong practice in others, teacher leaders will strengthen teaching and learning throughout their school. Participant selection and development should have a heavy focus on instructional expertise.

- **Teacher leader programs should be designed to emphasize practice and feedback.** The predominant approach to teacher leader preparation privileges formal learning formats in which participants receive training in a typical classroom arrangement. Few programs are encouraging more engaged and applied forms of job-embedded learning. This needs to change. Our field needs to build programs like ELP with school-based work, incremental practice with a team of teachers, and assignments and feedback that move schools forward even while teacher leaders are engaged in training. Across the education field there is significant momentum around the idea that teacher leaders can transform our nation’s schools for the better; with the right training and support, we can tap that potential.
References


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