Measuring the Principal Effectiveness Equity Gap within Wisconsin School Districts
Summary Study Findings

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Issue

Although effective leadership is important in all schools, research shows that it plays a critical role in determining the quality of teaching and achievement of students in low-income and ethnically diverse schools. Contrary to this, these schools are less likely to be led by a strong leader. It is not clear however, how differences in the quality of leadership found in low-income/diverse schools translates into differences in principal effectiveness ratings. The current study uses effectiveness ratings of principals, as part of the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness (EE) system, to measure differences in the effectiveness of school leadership within Wisconsin districts.

Study

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the state of Wisconsin’s EE process, we used Wisconsin Framework for Principal Leadership (WFPL) ratings of 322 principals within 61 districts, to study the extent that effective principals are equitably distributed across difference types of schools within school districts.

Findings

- Principals in low-income and diverse schools were rated as significantly less effective.
- Novice principals were rated as nearly a standard deviation less effective than principals with three or more years of experience.
- Regardless of experience, principals in more diverse schools within school districts were rated as less effective. Principals in schools that were comprised of nearly 100% students
of color were rated as over a standard deviation less effective than were principals in schools comprised of 50% students of color.

- School racial composition and principal experience were independently related with WFPL ratings. Thus, a new principal in a mostly diverse school within a district would be predicted to be rated as over 1.5 standard deviations less effective than a more experienced principal in a less diverse school (with 50% students of color).

Conclusions

- Within school districts, low-income and diverse schools disproportionately face challenges attracting and retaining effective principals. This results in less effective leadership in these schools.

- Any efforts to address equity gaps in access to effective teachers must also address equity gaps in access to effective principals. The effectiveness of teachers in diverse and low-income schools is largely determined by the effectiveness of leadership.

The full report, and other EE reports, can be found on our website at [www.uwm.edu/sreed](http://www.uwm.edu/sreed)

For more information about this study or about the state-wide evaluation of Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness, please contact Curtis Jones at [jones554@uwm.edu](mailto:jones554@uwm.edu)