

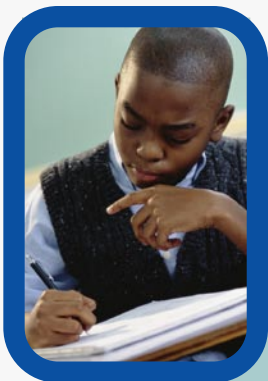


Center for the Study of
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HOW STATES SUPPORT LEARNING AND LEARNING-FOCUSED LEADERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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Who we are and how the study is supported

With support from The Wallace Foundation, a team of researchers from the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington is undertaking an investigation of leadership in districts and state systems that seek to improve both learning and leadership in schools and classrooms.

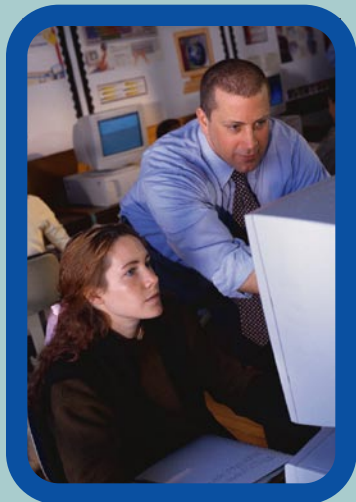


What this study is about

The state-level analysis is part of a larger investigation, the *Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement*, which is examining what it takes to promote powerful, equitable learning in schools, the district central office that serves the schools, and the state system of which the schools and district are a part. More specifically, the study explores how school leadership roles are reconfigured and leadership is exercised to pursue a learning improvement agenda that serves all students; what changes in policies, structural arrangements, and daily practice by central office staff support, direct, or inhibit the exercise of learning-focused leadership; and how staffing and other resources are (re)allocated and developed to maximize the pursuit of a school-based learning improvement agenda. The study also pays close attention to ways that local and state or federal policies and conditions create a “system of support” for school leaders’ work.

In this overall context, the state-level analysis pursues the following research question: *In what ways do states direct, support, or constrain school and district leaders’ efforts to focus attention, allocate resources, and take actions aimed at the improvement of teaching and learning?* Three subquestions investigate important dimensions of the overall question:

1. How do state leaders think about providing direction and support for school and district leaders’ efforts to improve teaching and learning for all students, and the exercise of learning-focused leadership?
2. What direction and support—through policies, program assistance, and resource allocation—does the state offer for improving both teaching and leadership practice at the school and district levels?
3. What specific state-level programs, policies, and conditions direct, support, or constrain local practices for allocating staffing and other resources aimed at improving teaching and learning for all students?



We have identified Georgia, Massachusetts, Oregon, New York, and California, as states with promising urban district sites for this investigation. These states, along with their local school systems, have long been concentrating on the improvement of instructional leadership and other aspects of leadership support, aided in part by grants from groups such as the Wallace Foundation.

Expected Contributions

Taken together, the information gleaned from this inquiry will help bring into view the manner and degree to which the state system as a whole directs, supports, and exercises what can be called “leadership for learning improvement.” By concentrating on states that have made the improvement of school leadership a priority, the study aims to inform policymakers, educational leaders, and others about what is possible when this degree of state-level attention and resources are focused on teaching and leadership practice, especially for areas with large populations of low-income students of color.

What the study involves

Specifically, we will be seeking insight from states on the aspects of their approach to education policy development, implementation, and resource allocation that are a good fit with the study objectives. For each state in the study, we will be gathering information of several kinds in two phases, across an 18-month period (Summer 2007 through Fall 2008) by:

- Examining current policies, state level organizations, program practices, funding and resource allocations, and performance data from available sources.
- Interviewing key participants, emphasizing those who currently or potentially exercise leadership that relates to classroom-based learning improvement, or who are in a position to influence local leaders’ work.
- Constructing an inventory of state policies specifically related to school and district staffing resources, leadership development, and learning-focused leadership practice.
- Mapping the interaction between key state agencies and local-level leaders, to understand how the state relates to districts and schools concerning the improvement of teaching and leadership practice.
- Examining previous state-driven, reform initiatives relevant to study objectives, to determine whether and how current and emerging initiatives build strategically on prior state reforms.

The study is designed to track a full annual cycle of resource allocation decisions, and to identify the consequences of these decisions for teaching and leadership practice.

Related Substudies

This investigation combines three substudies, each addressing one of the three central leadership issues:

- **School Leadership Roles for Learning Improvement: How Schools Reconfigure, Assess, and Support Learning-focused Leadership Roles**

Principal Investigators:

Dr. Bradley S. Portin
Dr. Michael S. Knapp

- **District-level Leadership for Learning: How School District Central Office Administrators Participate in Strengthening Learning Opportunities for All Students**

Principal Investigators:

Dr. Michael A. Copland
Dr. Meredith I. Honig

- **Rethinking the Allocation and Development of Staffing Resources to Support Learning Improvement and Learning-focused Leadership**

Principal Investigators:

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For Further Information

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