

# Principal Leadership and School Improvement: From Vision to Plans to Action

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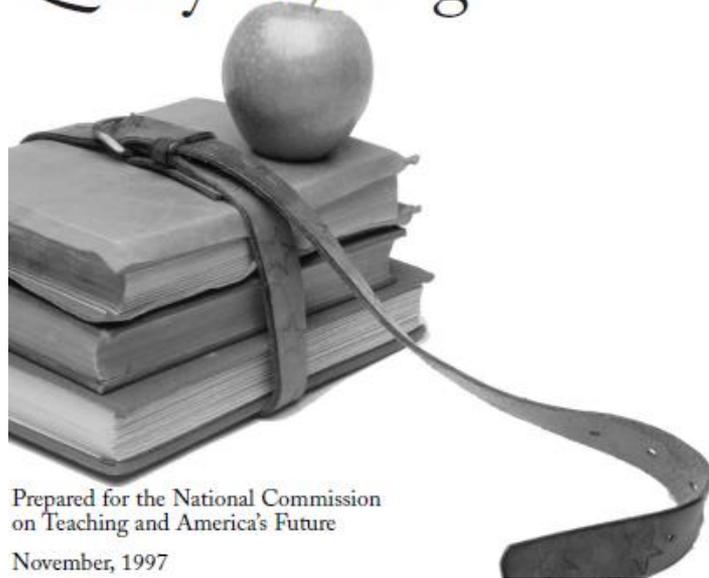
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# 1. Challenges you face in shaping the agenda

Narratives about the role of teachers (not principals) tend to dominate K-12 discussions.

Doing What  
Matters Most:  
Investing in  
Quality Teaching



Prepared for the National Commission  
on Teaching and America's Future

November, 1997

*“From the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is . . . the person standing at the front of the classroom.”*

*Barack Obama  
March 10, 2009*

# Capacity problems exist.

Table 5. Number of principals reporting to principal supervisors, n= 135

Descriptive statistics	Number
Minimum	3
Maximum	100
Average	24
Median	18
Mode	15

State	Total schools : SEA school improvement staff, 2011
CO	353.8 : 1
CA	139.4 : 1
NY	118.9 : 1
TN	90.0 : 1
LA	27.5 : 1

Sources:

(Top) Council of the Great City Schools and The Wallace Foundation. 2013. Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/rethinking-leadership-the-changing-role-of-principal-supervisors.aspx>

(Bottom) Center for Reinventing Public Education. 2011. <https://www.crpe.org/publications/limited-capacity-state-level-threat-future-school-improvement>

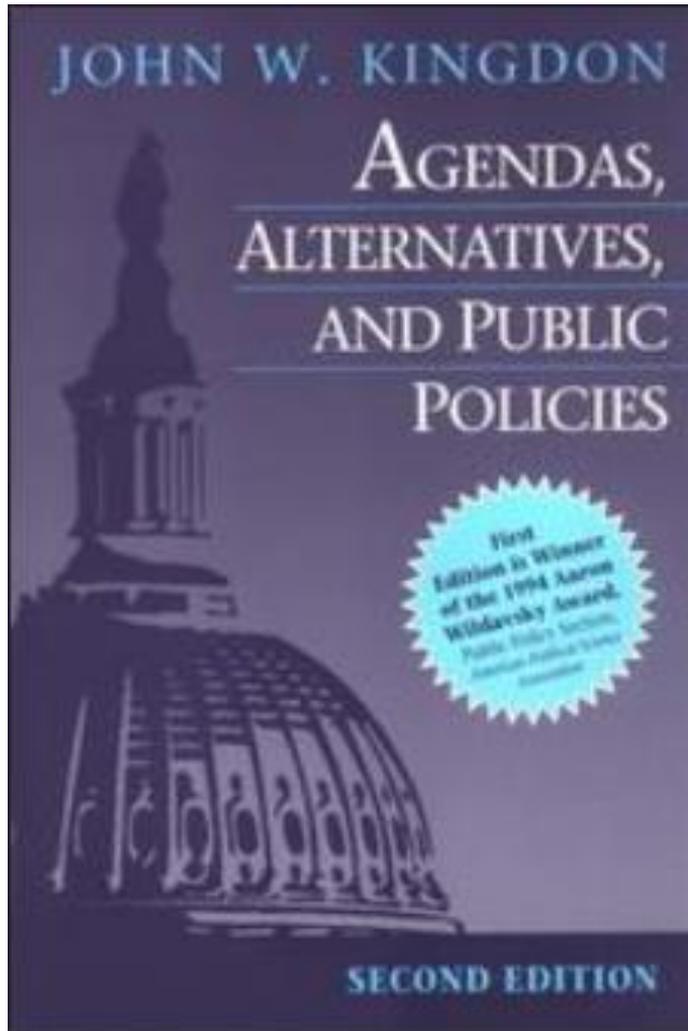
## Reputational problems exist.

**Critics blame education schools for intractable social problems they did not create and cannot solve, while education schools do business as usual, refusing to acknowledge the real problems that confront them.**

**Collectively, educational administration programs are the weakest of all the programs at the nation's education schools.**

Source: Arthur Levine. 2005. *Educating School Leaders*. The Education Schools Project.

## 2. Ideas for shaping the agenda to advance and sustain your work



When policy entrepreneurs couple problems, solutions, and politics they can increase their chances of influencing the agenda.

Kingdon, p. 20  
(my summary)

Principals are multipliers of effective teaching.

**The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortages**  
February 2017. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/role-principals-addressing-teacher-shortages-brief>

Kraft, Marinell, and Yee. 2016. **School Organizational Contexts, Teacher Turnover, and Student Achievement.**  
*American Educational Research Journal.*

Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin. 2013. **School Leaders Matter: Measuring the Impact of Effective Principals.**  
*Education Next.*

# Principals play distinctive & complex leadership roles.

*Percent of principals reporting “a great deal” or “major” influence over the following activities in their schools.*

<b>Traditional tasks</b>	<b>% in 2011</b>
Budget / school spending	61.8
Setting discipline policy	78.7
Hiring teachers	86.6
In-service teacher training	70.2
<b>Reform-oriented tasks</b>	
Set student performance standards	72.7
Evaluating teachers	95.1
Establishing curriculum	44.3

States and localities cannot afford not to invest in recruiting and retaining excellent principals.

*Estimated lower-bound and higher-bound cost of developing, hiring, and on-boarding a principal.*

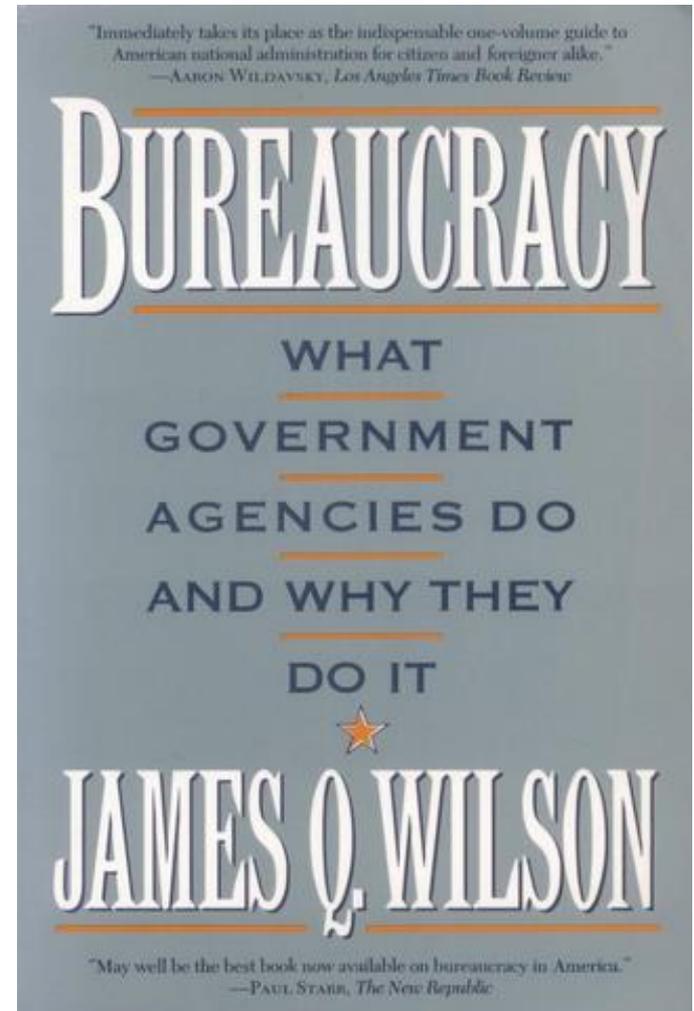
	Lower Expenditure	Upper Expenditure
Preparation	20,000	150,000
Hiring	5,850	20,000
Signing	0	25,000
Internship	0	85,000
Mentoring	11,000	15,000
Continuing Education	0	8,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$36,850</b>	<b>\$303,000</b>

### 3. From implementation plans to action

Your **goals** are to leverage principals to improve schools.

You design **school improvement plans** to help achieve those goals.

How will the plans alter for the better how people in state agencies, districts, and schools define and execute their **critical tasks**?





David Cohen and Susan Moffitt. 2009. *The Ordeal of Equality: Did Federal Regulation Fix the Schools?*



“The people and organizations that constitute practice must do the most important work.”  
(p. 228)

## Summary excerpt from a state ESSA plan

Key strategies and activities for principals and other school leaders will include:

- Using standards and frameworks to build instructional leadership capacity;
- Collecting and analyzing data related to student achievement and well-being;
- Implementing cycles of continuous improvement based on data.

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The Wallace Foundation

**Developing Excellent  
School Principals to  
Advance Teaching and Learning:**

Considerations for State Policy

**Paul Manna**



How to ask the right questions to move one's thinking from goals to plans to critical tasks of practitioners?

Manna (2015, Ch. 6) provides a suggested sequence.

Many thanks for the opportunity to work with you at today's event.

Don't hesitate to stay in touch.

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