

Written Testimony: Improving School Transformation Talent

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION | OCTOBER 6TH, 2026

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Chair Campbell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the committee's charge on school transformation talent. Philanthropy Advocates is a membership organization of nearly 60 Texas foundations that are deeply invested in student success in rural, urban, and suburban communities across the state. Together we advocate for policies that give all Texas students a high-quality education, equipping them to pursue their dreams and enjoy lifelong economic mobility.

Principals Drive School Outcomes

Texas has made historic investments in its teachers. Far less attention has gone to the principals who hire, develop, and keep those teachers, even though a principal shapes instruction in every classroom. New research from Dr. Jacob Kirksey at Texas Tech University, using more than a decade of statewide data, finds:¹

- **Principals matter for student learning.** We know teachers are the single greatest in-school factor affecting student learning. Principals are not far behind: the principal effect is about 60% of the teacher effect. And a principal's influence reaches every classroom on the campus.
- **Principal turnover is high and disruptive.** Nearly 1 in 4 Texas principals leaves their campus each year, and teachers are more likely to leave under a new principal.
- **Leaders grown from within stay longer.** Principals promoted from within their campus are more likely to stay, and so are their teachers.

National evidence points the same way. Six large districts supported by The Wallace Foundation built intentional principal pipelines with strong preparation, careful hiring, and on-the-job support.² Their schools outperformed comparison schools in reading and math and kept new principals longer, at a cost of about one half of one percent of district budgets.³

Recommendations to Strengthen the Pipeline

- **Grow leaders from within** by supporting district succession planning and assistant principal roles that build instructional leadership.
- **Support leadership transitions** with mentoring and support for new principals and their teachers in that critical first year.
- **Support training** by identifying high-quality principal preparation programs and bring them to scale
- **Recognize and retain effective leaders** by exploring ways to reward principals for campus results through the Enhanced Teacher Incentive Allotment

¹ J. Jacob Kirksey, Building a Strong School Leadership Pipeline, Texas Tech University, 2026.

² Anderson and Turnbull, Sustaining a Principal Pipeline, Policy Studies Associates, 2019.

³ Gates et al., Principal Pipelines: A Feasible, Affordable, and Effective Way for Districts to Improve Schools, RAND Corporation, 2019.